

Dr. MEHM TIN MON

*The Right View on Life: Living and Dying*

# THE RIGHT VIEW ON LIFE: LIVING AND DYING

by

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The Right View on Life is specially important  
for Living and Dying most happily and most beneficially.

Religious, Social, Science and Abhidhamma View on

# THE RIGHT VIEW ON LIFE: LIVING AND DYING

- What is the meaning of life?  
How does life come into existence?
- Human life is better than celestial life in some respects.
- Most people are Wandering in the Illusive World.
- What is the Real World? How can we know it?
- What are our bad qualities? How can we eliminate them?
- What are our good qualities? How can we cultivate them?
- How can the Law of Kamma rationally explain life problems?
- Can we develop the right view on life without knowing Kamma and its effect?
- What should we do to live most happily and most beneficially and die well?
- Get the best advice for good living and good dying!

**Dr. MEHM TIN MON**

This book is also printed in Myanmar language.

**မုန်ကန်သောဘဝအမြင်**  
အသက်ရှင်ခြင်းနှင့်သေခြင်း

DR. MEHM TIN MON

*The Right View on Life: Living and Dying*

**Abhidhamma gives the right view on existence.  
The right view is of paramount importance to live  
and die most happily and most beneficially.**

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*LIVING AND DYING***

by

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**Buddha Sāsanam ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu**

Religious Publication Permission No.(3205000707)

CoverDesign Permission No. (3206471007 )

**Publication:** 2007, December

First Printing

**Impression:** 1000 Copies

**Publisher:**

Mehm Tay Zar Mon

Yadana Min Literature (3455)

15/19, U Wisara Housing Estate

Dagon Township, Yangon.

**Printer:**

U Tin Maung Win

Thin Lai Win Press (05946)

No. 1, Bo Yar Nyunt Street,

Yaw Min Gyi Quarter,

Dagon Township, Yangon.

**Distribution:**

Mya Mon Yadanar Literature

15/19, U Wisara Housing Estate,

Dagon Township, Yangon.

Tel: 385261, 0980-22516

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*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa*

## PREFACE

The most important knowledge in life is the knowledge about the true nature of existence which can rationally answer the questions:

*Why are we born?*

*How do we come into the present existence?*

*What is the most important thing to do in life?*

*What is death? What will happen after death?*

I am a scientist as well as a religious teacher. I read philosophy, psychology, science and literature. But I cannot find rational answers to the above questions.

I had the chance to study **Abhidhamma**, the higher teaching of the Buddha, in 1980 and I passed the Abhidhamma examinations held annually by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, ordinary level in 1981 and honours level in 1983, standing first in both examinations in the whole of Myanmar.

Then I have been teaching Abhidhamma to university students and to the general public from 1983 till now so that they can understand Abhidhamma vividly and quickly.

Gradually the answers to the above important questions became evident in my mind in the light of Abhidhamma.

Indeed the Fully Self-enlightened Buddha had answered these questions more than 2500 years ago in his full Abhidhamma discourse. I found Abhidhamma to be the most valuable knowledge in life and I sincerely feel that everybody should learn the fundamental principles of Abhidhamma for his or her greatest benefit.

Abhidhamma is the rational, logical and scientific knowledge that the Buddha could see clearly with the direct knowledge of his omniscient wisdom. It had stood the test of time throughout the ages and can cope with modern science and modern psychology. Thus it should be rightly designated as the Supreme Science, and the Supreme Psychology of the Buddha.

Even the fundamentals of Abhidhamma given in *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* which was rewritten by me in plain, simple language under the title of "*The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*" and used as a teaching manual in my intensive Abhidhamma courses, will help the readers to understand the true nature of existence, the purpose of life, the best way of living and dying and the solution to all problems of life.

Besides the fundamental facts of Abhidhamma dealing with the full analysis of mind and body, the causal relations of Depending Arising which explain the round of rebirths, and the universal four Noble Truths have to

be verified in insight meditation and have been verified by millions of meditators throughout the ages.

So Abhidhamma is true and verified natural higher knowledge that leads to the highest wisdom to enjoy eternal peace and happiness

### **Buddha's Eternal Message**

*The Buddha has been something greater than all doctrine and dogma, and his eternal message has thrilled humanity through the ages. Perhaps at no time in past history was his message of peace more needed for a suffering and distracted humanity than it is today.*

*Jawaharlal Nehru, former Indian Prime Minister*

### **Buddhism Copes with Science**

*If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.*

*Albert Einstein, Great Scientist*

### **A Spirituel Science**

*Buddhism is a religion, a spiritual science and a way of life, which is reasonable, practical and all-embracing. For 2500 years it has satisfied the spiritual needs of nearly one-third of mankind. It appeals to the West, insists on self-reliance coupled with tolerance for the other's points of view, embraces science, religion, philosophy, psychology,*

*ethics and art, and points to man alone as the creator of his present life and sole designer of his destiny.*

*Christmas Humphreys,  
President of London Pāli Text Society*

### **The Writing of this Book**

As requested by the President of Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia, I gave a lecture on “*The Abhidhamma Perspective of Living and Dying*” in Buddha Mahā Vihāra, Quala Lumpur, in 2004. I repeated the lecture with some modification in the Buddha Relic Centre of Shwedagon Society, Singapore, in 2006. I have also delivered some lectures on ‘*Abhidhamma View on Existence*’ in Myanmar.

I combine the essential facts of these lectures in writing the present book entitled ‘*The Right View on life. Living and Dying*’. I hope readers will get the right view on existence and benefit greatly for their spiritual progress by reading this book.



**The birth of Prince Siddhattha at Lumbini garden**



Walking seven steps to the north after birth

1

## THE MEANING AND THE NATURE OF LIFE

### 1 Early Philosophers: *Life came from four Elements*

Throughout history philosophers wanted to know the true nature of existence and the fundamental elements that make up the universe.

Early philosophers believed that there were only four fundamental elements – earth, water, fire and air - that made up the universe. They also believed that life came from these elements and returned to these elements upon death. This assumption was later found to be unsatisfactory.

### 2 Leo Tolstoy: *life has no Meaning except waiting for Death*

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), Russian writer and religious philosopher, who won the Nobel Prize with his

great novel *'War and Peace'*, thought seriously about life in his old age.

*"Why were we born? How did we come into existence? Why are we alive? What is the purpose of living? What will happen after death? These are important questions", he said, "but as I could not find the answers, I felt that the place I was standing on collapsed."*

He saw life as a man chased by a bear. The man ran for his life. Seeing an old well with a branch of tree protruding from its wall he jumped down and clung to the branch. The bear waited for him to come up so that it could kill him. And below was a big python staring at him with green eyes and also waiting to swallow him when he fell down.

He had no way to escape. And there were a white rat and a black rat, representing day and night, biting the branch. How long could he keep on clinging to the branch? Even if he could hang on, he would fall down when the branch broke.

Just at that moment he perspired and felt hungry. Seeing some drops of honey on the leaves of the branch, he licked the honey drops without shame. So is life! Life has little enjoyment like sensual pleasure which is similar to licking the honey drops.

So Leo Tolstoy felt that life has no meaning except waiting for death.

3 Christmas Humphreys: *The world is like a Restaurant*

Christmas Humphreys, the President of London Pāli Text Society, compared the world with a restaurant. Just as some people are coming into the restaurant and some are leaving, so too are new babies being born to the world while old people are dying and leaving the world.

4 William Shakespeare: *All the World is a Stage*

William Shakespeare, the great English writer, wrote that all the world is but a stage where people came up in turn to play their respective roles as actors, actresses, clowns, musicians, singers, etc., Then they disappeared from the backstage, never to be seen again.

In the same way people appear in the world to play their roles as sons and daughters, then as parents, teachers, traders, merchants, scientists, etc., and then they die and disappear, never to be seen again.

5 Bertrand Russell: *Human Beings are like ship-wreck Travellers*

Bertrand Russell, the modern English philosopher and mathematician who won the Nobel Prize in literature for 1950, compared human beings with ship-wreck travellers clinging to planks and boards on the sea in darkness. The night was cold and the wind was strong. High tides pounded on the wearied people with numb hands, throwing them away from the planks and the boards.

They sank into the sea causing some bubbles to rise

where they sank. But soon the tides swept over the bubbles and kept rolling on the sea as if nothing had happened.

Similarly old people as well as young people are dying everyday in the world, but their friends and relatives, wept for a while and as they are so much occupied with their routine work that they soon forget all about the dead. In spite of many deaths each day the world rolls on as if nothing has happened.

#### 6 Socrates: *Know Thyself!*

Socrates: (469-399 B.C.), Greek philosopher who is regarded as one of the wisest men of all time, consulted the famous Oracle at Delphi. When his friend asked "Who is the wisest man in the world?" the Oracle said, "Know thyself; Socrates is the wisest man in the world".

It is indeed most important to know ourselves first. But Socrates admitted as a wise man: "*All I know is that I know nothing.*"

#### 7 Monotheistic Religions: *Preparation for two Eternities*

According to Monotheistic Religions human beings are created by an Almighty God and they are allowed to live just one existence to prepare for two eternities - the eternity of heaven and the eternity of hell.

A man will have as his future either the endless bliss in heaven or the endless suffering in hell. So, according to Monotheistic Religions, it is very impor-



tant to believe in God and abide by God's Commandments.

## 8 Natural Science: *Materialistic Outlook*

As natural science knows only material phenomena it gives the materialist outlook that a human life is produced from a zygote formed by the combination of an ovum from the mother and a sperm from the father. The zygote grows into a baby in the mother's womb and the baby, after being born, grows into a man by consuming food and water regularly.

He lives just for one life, doing some useful work for the community and his country, and when he dies there is no future existence. As his good and bad actions bear no results in the future it will be very hard to instil good morality into human beings. So human beings will be working like machines without any intrinsic moral virtues.



The marriage between Prince Siddhattha and  
Princess Yasodharā

2

## THE ABHIDHAMMA VIEW ON THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE

### 1 The Rational View: *Observing by Direct Knowledge*

Philosophers, psychologists, monotheists and scientists can neither see the past nor the future; neither can they see penetratively into the present to investigate the true nature of existence. They do not know what the mind really is and they do not know how to develop the mind to gain supernormal power.

In the case of the Buddha, even before he was fully enlightened as a Buddha and while he was still a Bodhisatta (Future Buddha), he could develop eight Jhāna attainments in each of ten kasiṇas and he had further trained his mind in fourteen ways to make it

perfectly skilful, pliable and tender so as to be amenable to his wishes.

In the first watch of the night on that auspicious day of his full enlightenment, the Bodhisatta inclined his mind toward the Supernormal Knowledge of Recollecting former Existences (*Pubbenivāsānussati Abhiññā*). Thereupon, that supernormal knowledge arose in him immediately.

Through that supernormal knowledge he recollected and saw all past activities, events and experiences of his past existences going back from the previous existence right up to the existence when he was Sumedha, the hermit. He also recollected in backward order many existences and many world-cycles prior to the Sumedha existence, and again recollected in the forward order his existences up to that of Setaketu Deva before his present existence.

He also saw that there were only the phenomena of mind and matter throughout the countless rounds of existences, the beginning of which is not known. In all the three occasions of birth, living and death, there are only the arising and dissolution of mentality and materiality (*nāma-rūpa*).

Indeed in all abodes and at all times, the psychophysical phenomena are in a continuous state of flux, like the flame of an oil lamp or like the current of a river. And through a succession of causes and effects, it is only the continuum of mentality-materiality which performs the various functions such as seeing visible objects,

hearing sounds, etc. , thus giving rise to various modes of intimating one's intentions by bodily movement and verbal expression, etc.

So in reality there is no sentient individual at all to be called 'I', 'you', 'man', 'woman', etc. Also there is no permanent entity which never perishes and which can be called a 'soul', 'ego', 'self', 'jīva' or 'atta'. Consequently there is not a single Almighty God or Brahmā who could create a permanent soul or a sentient being. This knowledge became very clear to the Bodhisatta.

At midnight on that auspicious day the Bodhisatta directed his mind continuum towards the **Supernormal Knowledge of Divine Eye** (*Dibbacakkhu*) and his supernormal knowledge arose easily. Through this knowledge he could see all sentient beings living in thirty-one planes of existence in one hundred-thousand-crore world systems.

Divine Eye (*Dibbacakkhu*) is also called the **Supernormal Knowledge of Seeing the Passing away and Reappearance of Sentient Beings** (*Cutūpapāta Ñāṇa*). Through this knowledge he could also see sentient beings who were on the verge of death or just after taking conception.

After seeing the denizens of the woeful abodes suffering misfortune through his divine eye, he reflected: "What kinds of deeds have these woeful beings done to suffer such awful miseries?" Thereupon, the **Supernormal Knowledge of Faring According to**

Deeds (*Yathākammūpaga Ñāṇa*) which enabled him to see the deeds of demerit done by these beings arose in him.

Likewise after seeing through his divine eye the immense happiness enjoyed by sentient beings of the realms of humans, Devas and Brahmās, he reflected: “What kinds of deeds have these beings done to enjoy such progressively magnificent bliss in their respective realms?” Thereupon, the supernormal knowledge of Faring according to Deeds which enabled him to see the meritorious deeds done by these beings arose in him.

In the last watch of the night on that auspicious day when he would be enlightened as a Buddha, the Bodhisatta inclined his mind continuum to attain the **Supernormal Knowledge of Extinction of Moral Intoxicants** (*Āsavakkhaya Ñāṇa* or *Arahattamagga Ñāṇa*).

He contemplated the causal relations which give rise to continuous succession of existences according to the deeds or volitional actions (*Kammās*) performed by various beings. Thereupon, he discovered the **Doctrine of Dependent Arising** (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) consisting of eleven causal relations and twelve factors. Going over this doctrine of Dependent Arising in forward and reverse order repeatedly, he understood very clearly why all beings are going from one existence to another in the round of birth and death (*Samsāra*).

## 2 Great Insight Meditation: *Reflecting on Three Characteristics of Existence*

Then the Bodhisatta undertook the Great Insight Meditation known as *Mahāvajjira Vipassanā*, reflecting on the true nature of mentality, materiality that made up all beings who resided in a hundred thousand crores of world systems known as the Field of Authority of a Buddha.

The ultimate mental entities (consciousness and mental factors) and the ultimate material entities (four primary elements and derived elements) truly make up the whole universe. Since they arise and perish very rapidly and incessantly they are *impermanent (anicca)*, and being impermanent means unsatisfactory or *suffering (dukkha)* for the fact that to be constantly tortured by the incessant dissolution of mentality-materiality really amounts to suffering.

Furthermore, the absence of 'self', 'soul', 'jīva' or 'atta' means '*anatta*', i.e. '*non-self*'. Thus the characteristics of *impermanence*, *suffering* and *non-self* are common to all mentality-materiality. They are known as the '**three characteristics of existence**'.

When the Bodhisatta contemplated the true nature of humans, Devas, Brahmās and woeful beings living in a hundred thousand crores of world systems and belonging to the three periods of time, he came to know full well that they are made up of mentality-materiality and they have the same nature of impermanence, suffering and non-self. Moreover they can be

reduced to twelve factors of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* in the ultimate sense.

It is the usual practice of every Bodhisatta on the eve of his attainment of Buddhahood to reflect on the Doctrine of Dependent Arising in forward and backward order and again reflect on each factor in terms of three characteristics: *impermanence, suffering, non-self*.

Our Bodhisatta developed ten insight knowledges, fourfold Path Wisdom and fourfold Fruition Wisdom by undertaking Mahāvajīra Vipassanā. The fourfold Path-Wisdom destroys all defilements (*kilesās*) including latent defilements (*anusaya kilesās*). When he realized the fourth Fruition called Arahatta-phala immediately after the realization of Arahatta-magga, his mind continuum was totally pure and there was not a trace of defilement to prevent his great fulfilment of Perfection (*Pāramīs*) from bearing results.

So at that moment he realized the true Omniscient Wisdom called *Sabbāññuta Ñāṇa* and became a Perfectly Self-Enlightened Buddha, the Supreme Head of the three worlds. He attained Buddhahood with the arising of *Sabbāññuta Ñāṇa* - the supreme wisdom that knows everything that should be known.

### 3 Causes and Effects: *Perpetual Round of Rebirths*

The twelve factors that form the eleven causal relations of the Doctrine of Dependent Arising can be classified as three rounds as follows.

- (i) *Round of Defilements* - ignorance (*avijjā*)  
craving (*taṇhā*)  
clinging (*upādāna*)
- (2) *Round of Kamma* -Kamma formations (*saṅkhāra*)  
Kamma seeds (*kamma-bhava*)
- (3) *Round of Resultants*- rebirth-process (*upapatti-bhava*)  
consciousness (*viññāṇa*)  
mentality-materiality(*nāma-rūpa*)  
sense bases (*saḷāyatana*)  
contact (*phassa*)  
feeling (*vedanā*)  
rebirth (*jāti*)  
ageing-and-death (*jarā-maraṇa*)

Now *defilements* (*kilesās*) always lie latent or dormant in the mind, ready to arise in the mind when sense objects strike the respective sense doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, mind) and *feeling* (*vedanā*) arises.

*Ignorance* (*avijjā*) is the ignorance of the true nature of sense objects, the ignorance of kamma and its result, the ignorance of the Doctrine of Dependent Arising and the ignorance of the four Noble Truths.

*Craving* (*taṇhā*) is craving for sensual pleasure and sense objects, because *ignorance* makes sense objects appear permanent, pleasant, self or substantive, and beautiful whereas sense objects are in reality impermanent, unpleasant, non-self and loathsome or disgusting.

*Clinging* (*upādāna*) is strong attachment to sensual pleasure and sense objects.



*Ignorance, craving and clinging* exert great force and influence to make living beings perform volitional actions to enjoy sensual pleasure such as killing a chicken and frying it, stealing other's property, cheating others of their money, committing rape or adultery, consuming intoxicating drinks or drugs, or performing meritorious deeds to enjoy greater sensual pleasure in celestial abodes.

During an immoral action billions of immoral minds associated with immoral volitions arise and dissolve as *kamma formations*, leaving or depositing billions of *kamma seeds* in the mental stream.

Similarly during a moral action like performing alms-giving, observing moral precepts or undertaking meditation billions of moral minds associated with moral volitions arise and dissolve as *kamma formations*, leaving or depositing billions of *kamma seeds* in the mental stream.

These immoral *kamma seeds* and moral *kamma seeds* will start bearing bad fruits and good fruits respectively starting from the present existence. At death one of the strong *kamma seeds* called *reproductive kammās* will have the chance to condition the next existence.

If a wholesome *kamma* has the chance to bear result, a new existence in a blissful plane, either human or celestial, will arise. If an unwholesome *kamma* has the chance to condition a new existence, that existence will arise in one of the woeful planes.

Again when *kamma seeds* produce new existences, *ignorance, craving and clinging* act as supporting forces

just like earth, water and air support plant seeds to give rise to new plants.

So beings will be reborn in the places where they cling to. For examples, the rich Brahmin called Todeya was reborn as a dog in his house; the monk Tissa was reborn as a flea in the robe he clung to; the lady Uposathā who maintained pure morality was reborn as a celestial maiden in the pleasant *Nandavana Garden* in *Tāvātimsā Realm* where she wished to be.

When a new existence arises, *ignorance*, *craving* and *clinging* also arise in the new mental stream as latent defilements. When sense objects strike the respective sense doors causing feeling to arise, defilements arise again in the mental stream. These defilements will cause new kamma formations and kamma seeds to arise. With the support of ignorance, craving and clinging, these kamma seeds will produce new existences, i.e. the round of resultants again at death.

So the round of rebirths, *Samsāra*, will keep on rolling as “kilesa round - kamma round - vipāka round - kilesa round - kamma round - vipāka round .....” The most fundamental round is the round of defilements.

So long as defilements are present in the minds of living beings, they will perform volitional or intentional actions producing kamma formations and kamma seeds. These kamma seeds will produce new existences at death with the support of *ignorance*, *craving* and *clinging*. When new existences arise these defilements also arise as latent defilements. So is the

round of rebirths called *samsāra* kept going on for each individual from time immemorial to unlimited future.

4 **How long is *Samsāra*? *You have lived uncountable Existences***

- \* *Which do you think is more: the flood of tears, which weeping and wailing you have shed upon this long way hurrying and hastening through the round of rebirths, united with unbeloved ones and separated from beloved ones - this, or the water in the four oceans?*

*You have indeed shed more tears upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans.*

*(Anamatagga Saṃyutta, Tiṇakaṭṭha Sutta, 394)*

- \* *Samsāra is so long that there is no one who has been not related to us as father, mother, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, etc. So we should not be hostile but friendly to one another. (S.ii. 189-190)*

5 **No Assumptions in Buddhism:  
*Every Teaching can be Verified***

- \* *It is a glory of Buddhism that it makes intellectual enlightenment as essential condition of salvation. In Buddhism morality and intellectual enlightenment are inseparable from each other. While morality forms the basis of the*

26 ❖ Dr. Mehm Tin Mon

*higher life, knowledge and wisdom complete it.*

*Without a perfect understanding of the law of causality and transformation (Paṭiccasamuppāda), no one can even be said to be truly moral if he does not possess the necessary insight and knowledge.*

*In this respect Buddhism differs from all other religions. All monotheistic religions start with certain assumptions, and when these assumptions are contradicted by the growth of knowledge it increases sorrow. But Buddhism starts with no assumptions. It stands on the firm rock of facts, and need therefore never shun the dry light of knowledge.*

*Professor Lakshmi Narasu,  
"The Essence of Buddhism"*

The Buddha showed the way how to develop mental concentration to make the mind powerful to see things as they really are and to verify his teachings including the causal relations of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and the Four Noble Truths in insight meditation.

All the teachings of the Buddha including the greatest Universal Noble Truths have been verified by many noble persons by their own direct knowledge throughout history.



Renouncing the world to become a monk

3

THE HUMAN EXISTENCE IS ONE OF THE BEST

1 Five Things very hard to attain:

*Our life is most precious*

The Buddha reminds his disciples everyday that there are five things very hard to attain and urges them to fulfil the Noble Threefold Training to liberate themselves from all suffering.

- (1) It is very hard to become a Buddha. So it is also very hard to come across the Buddha's Teachings or *Sāsanā*.
- (2) It is very hard to attain the human existence.
- (3) It is very hard to develop *faith (saddhā)* in the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Samgha and the law of kamma.

- (4) It is very hard to attain monkhood as a bhikkhu.
- (5) It is extremely hard to listen to the Dhamma which is delivered correctly as expounded by the Buddha. (*Sagāthāvagga Saṃyutta, A. 225*)

As most of us have attained four or five of these things we should regard our life to be very valuable and we should not misuse it by living carelessly or by just enjoying sensual pleasure. No one should commit suicide under any circumstance for such an indecent act means total failure in life.

We should strive to our utmost to make use of the golden chances open to us to attain the highest goal in life as advised by the Buddha.

## 2 Human Realm: *Better than celestial Realms in some Respects*

Both human existence and sensuous celestial existence are attained by the fruition of ordinary meritorious deeds such as alms-giving, observing moral precepts or practising meditation. The celestial sensual pleasure is however much superior to human sensual pleasure.

Greater sensual pleasure means more sense enjoyment and more heedlessness of meritorious deeds. Some celestial beings enjoy sensual pleasure so much that they forget to eat and so they die. As they are heedless of meritorious deeds, they are likely to be reborn in woe-ful abodes after death.

A Tāvātimsā deva by the name of Mālābhārī was enjoying in Nandavana Garden with one thousand fe-

male celestial beings, and put them on him. female celestial beings in hell. Seeing that the same fate, Mālābhārī too, to the Buddha and listened to the Dhamma when they all became Stream Winners.

The human realm enjoyed both the fruit of kamma and the fruit of effort. As happiness is mixed with suffering and human beings encounter ageing, ailing, and death more often than celestial beings, they are not so heedless of meritorious deeds as celestial beings.

They are very courageous and industrious in performing wholesome actions, and men can become bhikkhus and can strive on to become great disciples of the Buddha, Pacceka Buddhas and Buddhas. Celestial beings cannot have these opportunities.

When a celestial being is about to die, his or her companions advise him or her to go to the human realm, to acquire faith in the Triple Gem, and to establish it as unshakeable faith (*Adhigama Saddhā*) by practising to become a Stream Winner.

We should follow this example and try to become at least Stream Winners so that we can enjoy the matchless Nibbāna bliss as much as we like and we can be fully guaranteed never to be reborn in woeful abodes again.

### 3 Sensual Pleasure: *Prelude to Suffering*

Sensual pleasure is a low form of enjoyment that is much treasured by human beings and animals alike. Sense objects are not pleasant, not beautiful and not desirable if we can see them as they really are. Because we are blinded by *ignorance (avijjā)* they appear to be pleasant, beautiful and desirable.

So *craving (taṇhā)* craves for them and influences men to chase after sensual pleasure. There is no doubt a momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification, and recollection of such material pleasures, but they are illusory and fleeting. Why ?

Abhidhamma describes that sensual pleasure is made up of pleasant sensations which arise when sense doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) are in contact with the corresponding pleasant sense objects and the joy which associates with greed-rooted consciousness that enjoys sensual pleasure. All these pleasant things dissolve soon after they have arisen, leaving hunger or thirst for more sense enjoyment.

So we have to exert constant effort in order to enjoy sensual pleasure again and again. When we cannot enjoy it any more, we are frustrated and disappointed. Hunger for sensual pleasure, exerting constant effort, frustration and disappointment are indeed suffering.

Thus sensual pleasure is illusive, fleeting, transient and a prelude to suffering.. Moreover, it is accompanied by the hottest worldly fires of *greed (lobha)*, *ig-*



norance (*avijjā*) and anger (*dosa*). So heart-broken lovers like Romeo and Juliet, who could no longer bear the pain, committed suicide. They might be re-born in hell after death since defilements condition re-birth in woeful abodes.

#### 4 Nakha Sikha Sutta: *Many are reborn in Woeful Abodes*

The Buddha placed a little amount of earth on his thumb nail and asked the bhikkus: “Which has more grains of sand - the earth on my thumb or the earth in the whole globe?”

The bhikkhus replied that the number of grains of sand in the whole globe is many times greater than the number of grains on his thumb.

“So too”, said the Buddha, “when living beings die, if the number of beings born in the human realm and celestial realms amounts to the number of grains of sand on my thumb, the number of beings born in the four woeful abodes far exceeds the number of grains of sand in the whole earth”.

*“Cattāro apāyā saka gehā sa disā.”*

*“The four woeful abodes are the permanent homes of living beings.”*

When the sun sets people return to their respective homes. Similarly when the wholesome kammās that condition human existences expire, people may go back to their permanent homes which are none other than the four woeful abodes. Coming into human exist-

once is like taking a visit to the human realm.

We must be very careful not to fall back into the woeful state for it may take many billion years to escape from that state and regain the human existence. In the woeful state the intelligence is very low and woeful beings cannot differentiate between good and evil. And they have no chance to perform meritorious deeds. This is the reason why the Buddha says that it is very hard to attain the human existence.

### 5 Enlightened Faith: *The most valuable Treasure*

We are very fortunate to be born as human beings at the time when the Buddha's teachings still flourish in the world. We can listen to the Dhamma and we can study all the teachings of the Buddha in the Buddhist Canons known as *Tipitakas*.

As lay persons we shall not find time to study the *Tipitakas* thoroughly. However, if we can just study a brief summary of *Abhidhamma* we shall understand the true nature of existence and the real facts of life. We shall attain "*the Right View of life*" known as "*Sammāditṭhi*", and we can use this right view as the guiding torch of life for leading a righteous and prosperous life.

'*Abhidhamma*' is the higher teaching of the Buddha. '*Abhi*' means profound, excellent, sublime and marvellous and '*Dhamma*' means 'the truth or the natural entities that really exist and bear their own characteristics.'

'*Dhamma*' also means 'the teachings of the Buddha that can salvage those who abide by the Dhamma from falling into miserable abodes and that can purify the mind from defilements so as to achieve lasting peace and happiness'.

*Abhidhamma* explains the *Dhamma* in detail and in an analytical way. It analyses all psychophysical phenomena in the whole universe into ultimate realities called *paramatthas* and explains all natural phenomena in terms of these ultimate realities.

To understand rationally the true nature of all psychophysical phenomena and the real facts of life is very enlightening and it frees us from false beliefs and ignorance. We can also respectfully admire the true omniscient wisdom (*Sabbaññuta Nāṇa*) of the Buddha.

*So knowing the Dhamma is knowing the Buddha.* This **Dhamma** is real and so is the Fully Enlightened **Buddha**. And the **Samgha**, represented by noble persons (*Ariyas*) who have totally or almost totally purified their minds and who are led by the Buddha himself, is really very sacred. It represents the most fertile field for sowing the seeds of merit. The **Samgha** members maintain the **Dhamma** in its pure form and teach us the **Dhamma** so that we can lead a righteous and beneficial life.

Thus *the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha are our greatest benefactors.* To have faith and confidence (*saddhā*) in them called the Triple Gem is the

most valuable wealth we can possess.

The weak, traditional faith (*pasāda saddhā*) is not safe and sufficient for it can be easily destroyed. That faith should be augmented with understanding and wisdom to promote it to the level of *enlightened faith* (*okappana saddhā*).

In fact, if we can develop it further to the level of *unshakeable faith* (*Adhigama Saddhā*) by undertaking the Noble Threefold Training, we shall become **Stream Winners** (*Sotāpanna*) and can enjoy the eternal bliss of Nibbāna as much as we like with the full guarantee never to be reborn in the woeful state again.

By studying *Abhidhamma* we should promote our faith to the level of *enlightened faith* first. Then we shall regularly perform meritorious deeds to accumulate good karmas as much as we like to be reborn in blissful planes for many existences.

At the time of **Anomadassī Buddha**, an incalculable aeon (*asaṅkheyya kappa*) and one hundred thousand world cycles ago, a poor man looked after his blind parents attentively. He could not offer anything to the Buddha. With the help of a chief Disciple of the Buddha he took refuge in the Triple Gem and revered the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha throughout his life. So he had accumulated an uncountable number of wholesome karmas.

For these good deeds he was reborn again and again in celestial planes and the human plane in an incalculable aeon and one hundred thousand world cycles,

never was he reborn in the woeful abodes.

In his last existence he was born as a rich man's son in Sāvatti. At the age of seven, while he was playing with some companions, he ran into a monastery with his companions. A monk asked them to sit down and take the Noble Threefold Refuge.

After the boy recited '*Buddham saranam gacchāmi, Dhammam saranam gacchāmā, Saṅgham saranam gacchāmi*' as taught by the monk, he was enlightened fully to become a Perfect One called '*Arahant*' who could enjoy the bliss of Nibbāna for ever. He became a monk and was known as '**Saraṇa Gamana Thera**'.

We should follow the example of this Arahant. Having attained one of the best existences as a human being in the Buddha Dispensation we should accumulate good karmas with strong faith and try to liberate ourselves from all suffering by walking on the Noble Eightfold Path.



Practising extreme asceticism in Uruvela forest

4

## CONVENTIONAL TRUTH AND ULTIMATE TRUTH

### 1 Realities: *Conventional Reality and Ultimate Reality*

Abhidhamma first teaches us to be aware of two kinds of realities: Conventional Reality and Ultimate Reality.

Conventional realities consist of all living beings and inanimate things that we see around us. They are given names to be used in daily communication. For examples, man, woman, dog, cat, house, table, tree, flower, earth, mountain, ocean, sky, etc., are conventional realities.

They seem to really exist according to our sense perception. We can see them and even touch them.

We even gave names to them so that we can refer to them in everyday communication. When we use these vocabularies such as 'man, woman, I, you, he , she, house, table' in conversation, we feel sure that they really exist.

Abhidhamma philosophy maintains that these notions do not possess ultimate validity, for the objects which the words refer to do not exist in their own right as irreducible realities. Their mode of being is conceptual, not actual. They are products of mental construction, not realities existing by reason of their own intrinsic nature.

For example, 'table' is not a reality because when the pieces of wood in the table are taken apart, the table disappears.

Similarly a 'house' is not a reality and it does not really exist for it disappears when the roof and the walls are taken apart.

Again 'man' and 'woman' do not really exist for they disappear when they are divided into head-hairs, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, blood, bones, heart, liver, lungs, intestines, etc. These components, in turn, do not really exist, because they turn to ashes when they are incinerated.

**Ultimate realities**, in contrast to conventional realities, are things that really exist by reason of their own intrinsic nature. These are the dhammas: the final, irreducible components of existence, the ultimate entities which result from a correctly performed analysis

of all living beings and inanimate things.

Conventional realities are living beings and inanimate things that we think to really exist, but they do not really exist. Ultimate realities are the ultimate components of living beings and inanimate things; they really exist, but they cannot be seen.

The ultimate entities which permit no further analysis are called '*paramatthas*'; this word is derived from '*parama*' = ultimate, final, and '*attha*' = reality or thing.

So by 'ultimate reality' we mean something which cannot be changed into simpler things or divided up into other things. It can neither be created nor destroyed by man. It really exists in nature and it holds on its characteristics till it perishes. It can stand the test of investigation by any method about its reality and real existence.

Abhidhamma describes four classes of ultimate realities.

#### (1) Consciousness (*Citta*)

It is the awareness of a sense object. All sentient beings possess "consciousness" since they can be aware of sense objects. Citta is just one kind in terms of awareness of the senses.

#### (2) Mental factors (*cetasikas*)

They are the components of the mind that arise together and dissolve together with consciousness.

So Abhidhamma analyses the '*mind*' into '*consciousness*' and '*mental factors*'. There are 52 types



of mental factors with different characteristics and different functions.

Mental factors occur in close association with consciousness. They assist consciousness in the total act of cognition of each sense object. They also influence the mind in several ways. They assist the mind in performing various actions. These actions determine the fate and destiny of each individual as well as the course of history of mankind.

### (3) *Matter (rūpa)*

It is defined as that which changes form, colour or shape owing to adverse physical conditions such as cold and heat.

Abhidhamma enumerates 28 types of ultimate matter which comprise four primary elements and twenty four types of derived matter.

The four primary elements are the element of solidity (*pathavī*), the element of fluidity (*āpo*), the element of heat (*tejo*) and the element of motion (*vāyo*). They are just like energy without form and shape.

The 28 types of ultimate matter correspond to all types of matter and energy known in science. Since science knows only about matter and energy and is ignorant of the mind, it can explain only material phenomena whereas Abhidhamma can explain all psychophysical phenomena in detail.

### (4) *Nibbāna*

It signifies the extinction of the worldly 'fires' of greed, hatred and delusion. It has the characteristic of

eternal peace and bliss (*santi sukha*).

Greed or craving (*lobha*), anger or hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance or delusion (*moha* or *avijjā*) are the causes of all suffering. When they are totally eliminated, no suffering arises in the mind any more and there will be ever lasting peace and bliss, which is Nibbāna.

Nibbāna is supramundane and it is realized by the knowledge of the fourfold Path-wisdom and the fourfold Fruition-wisdom in this very life.

Nibbāna always exists naturally. But we cannot see it because our mind is shielded and blinded by defilements (*kilesās*). It is just like the moon on the full-moon day. Though it surely exists in the sky, we cannot see it when it is shielded by thick clouds. When all the clouds are driven away by strong winds, however, the moon becomes visible immediately.

Similarly when all defilements (greed, anger and delusion) are totally destroyed by the fourfold Path-Wisdom, Nibbāna becomes clearly visible with Path-consciousness and Fruition-consciousness.

## 2 Truth: *Conventional Truth and Ultimate Truth*

In accordance with two kinds of realities there are also two kinds of truth: conventional truth and ultimate truth.

### (1) *Conventional Truth (Samuti-sacca)*

It takes conventional realities to really exist and speaks in terms of conventional realities. Any speech or expression using the words or names to mean as

they are conventionally accepted without any intention of lying is called conventional truth.

In our daily life we use conventional words or vocabulary to express what we want to say. We accept conventional truth and we take 'man, woman, father, mother, son, daughter, teacher, pupil, upright person, wicked person' to really exist.

So if a man kills another man or steals other's property, it is a crime. If a father or a mother does not bring up his or her children properly, it is a breach of parents' duty. If a son or a daughter does not look after his or her aged parents, it is a breach of the duty of sons and daughters.

So we must accept and respect conventional truths in our daily communication. We must respect our parents, teachers and elders. We must develop loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy towards all living beings. We must not neglect them but respect them as every living being and every inanimate thing deserve due respect.

In science too, though only electrons, protons, neutrons and energy exist in the ultimate sense, we cannot deny and neglect the existence of atoms and molecules formed by the combination of sub-atomic particles as well as the existence of cells, organs, living beings and inanimate things formed by the combination of atoms and molecules.

But in explaining the nature of all things and all

phenomena, we have to consider the characteristics of sub-atomic particles. In other words, the knowledge of ultimate realities help us to understand the nature of all things and all phenomena. It is similar to the necessity to know about the parts of a car in order to know the nature of the car.

### (2) Ultimate Truth (*Paramattha-sacca*)

It takes conventional realities not to exist in the ultimate sense and regards only ultimate realities to exist in the ultimate sense. Speaking in terms of ultimate realities is ultimate truth.

To say that “a man or a woman, I and you exist” is true according to conventional truth but wrong according to ultimate truth.

To speak that “a man is in reality just a combination of ultimate mental entities (*nāma*) and ultimate material entities (*rūpa*) or a combination of five aggregates (*khandhas*)” is always true as the expression is concerned with ultimate truth.

Any principle or natural law which does not change on account of time or occasion and which always remains true is the ultimate truth.

Any speech or expression which is in accord with the nature of Dhamma (natural truth) is regarded as ultimate truth.

The teachings of the Buddha which deal with natural phenomena such as ‘the Law of Consciousness’ (*Citta-niyāma*), ‘the Law of Karma’ (*Kamma-niyāma*),

the Doctrine of Dependent Arising' (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*), the four Noble Truths (*Ariya-saccas*), etc., are also ultimate truths.

### 3 Two Worlds: *Illusive World and Real World*

Ordinary human beings with a lot of defilements are called 'worldlings' (*puṭhujjanas*). As worldlings our minds are blinded by 'ignorance' (*avijjā*) and we cannot see the true nature of sense objects. So we see living beings and inanimate things to really exist and we regard them to be permanent, pleasant, beings or things, beautiful and desirable. This is the 'illusive world' that we live in.

In reality all living beings are made up of 'consciousness' (*citta*), 'mental factors' (*cetasikas*) and 'ultimate material entities' (*rūpas*). Inanimate things are composed of ultimate material entities only. All these ultimate realities are formless, shapeless and they arise and dissolve very rapidly and incessantly. So they are really 'impermanent' (*anicca*).

What is not permanent is 'unsatisfactory' and to be tortured incessantly by the dissolution of 'nāma' (mental entities consisting of consciousness and mental factors) and 'rūpa' (ultimate material entities) really amounts to 'suffering' (*dukkha*).

Moreover, as 'nāma-rūpa' have no form and shape and they arise and dissolve very rapidly and incessantly, no 'person', no 'self', no 'soul', no 'jīva', no 'atta', no permanent entity really exists. This phenomenon is called 'non-self' (*anatta*).

Furthermore, all living beings and inanimate things are neither beautiful nor desirable. If we divide a beautiful lady or a handsome man into head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, blood, bones, heart, lungs, livers, intestines, sweat, pus, phlegm, faces, urine, etc., and examine each part carefully, we find that no part is beautiful and all parts are repulsive and disgusting.

Even if our hair, which we regard to be beautiful, falls into our soup bowl, we feel disgusted. When a beautiful woman smiles, her teeth shine like pearls and appear to be very beautiful. But if she has tooth ache and has one tooth extracted, will you accept it if she gives it to you to put it in a gold locket and to hang the locket on your neck? No, you will not take it as you feel repulsive.

And how about the body after peeling off the skin? It will be equally disgusting as a deskinning lamb carcass in a butcher's shop!

Thus all living beings and inanimate things have the characteristics of *impermanence (anicca)*, *suffering (dukkha)*, *non-self (anatta)* and *repulsiveness (asubha)*.

This is the true nature of the world around us. That is the real world we live in. We can see the world like this if our mind is free from defilements and pure. The purity of the mind can be attained by developing mental concentration to the *absorption* or *jhāna* state. The pure mind radiates very bright and penetrative light. With the help of this light we can see the real

world!

That is the reason why the Buddha exhorted his disciples to develop the right concentration to see things as they really are. The right concentration as he mentioned in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is the concentration associated with four *rūpāvacara jhānas*. These jhānas can be developed by undertaking *Ānāpanassati*, the meditation on mindfulness of breathing, correctly.

If we see the real world we shall not crave for sense objects and shall not get attached to them since they are unpleasant and disgusting. Since unpleasant and undesirable sense objects produce painful or neutral feeling when they are in contact with the sense doors there is no sensual pleasure to be craved for.

If we are not attached to anything, we are free from grief, worry, fear and sense desire. So we can live very happily.

*From craving springs grief,  
From craving springs fear.  
For him who is wholly free from craving,  
there is no grief, much less fear.*

(*Dhammapada* 216)

But, as we are blinded by *ignorance (avijjā)*, our worldly outlook is just upside down. We see the sense objects around us to be *permanent (nicca)*, *blissful (sukha)*, *self or person (atta)* and *beautiful (subha)*.

So we crave for them and get attached to them. From craving and attachment spring grief, worry, fear and despair. These are the manifestation of *anger (dosa)*.

So we live in the illusive world enjoying sensual pleasure and we think we are happy because we are blinded by ignorance. In enjoying sensual pleasure we are constantly burnt by the worst worldly fires of craving or greed (*lobha*), anger or grief (*dosa*) and ignorance or delusion (*moha* or *avijjā*).

*“Nathi rāga samo aggi.”*

*“There is no fire as hot as the fire of craving or greed.”*

#### 4 Wise Reflection: *Wholesome Thoughts and Moral Actions*

Wise reflection gives rise to wholesome thoughts and moral actions whereas unwise reflection gives rise to unwholesome thoughts and immoral actions.

To make wise reflection we must be aware of the two kinds of truth: conventional truth and ultimate truth. Conventional truth is apparent truth and it is not true in the ultimate sense.

Conventional Truth points out the illusive world where living beings enjoy sensual pleasure without knowing that they are being burnt by worldly fires. It is like the moths plunging into fire.

Ultimate truth is the real truth that refers to ultimate realities - *nāma-rūpa* - the only real constituents of the whole universe. Since ultimate realities are formless and shapeless, we cannot see them with our naked eyes. We can see them only with the concentrated mind-eye, that is the mind associated with the right



concentration.

The ultimate truth points out the real world in which there are no living beings and no inanimate things. There are no 'I', no 'you', no 'self'. Only ultimate realities are arising and dissolving rapidly and incessantly according to the law of cause and effect. There is no person to be regarded as 'I' and become selfish, proud and conceited. There are no beloved ones and no enemies to be angry with.

If some one insults us, we can tolerate the insult by reflecting that there is no 'I' to be insulted and there is no 'person' to insult us. If food is not good, we can reflect, "I should not crave for fried chicken or roasted pork which does not really exist. This food contains carbohydrates, proteins and essential vitamins; so it is all right".

If we can make wise reflection, moral minds will arise and our actions and speeches will be blameless. So we can live happily without stress and strain.

To make wise reflection the true nature of sense objects with respect to impermanence, suffering, non-self and repulsiveness must be clearly understood and reflected often.

Venerable Khan Tee Sayadaw, *Abhidhaja Mahāraṭṭhaguru*, gave the following advice:

*"Seeing and knowing just conventional realities or concepts give one the wrong view and the wrong knowledge.*

*Seeing and knowing ultimate realities give*

*one the right view and the right knowledge.*

*Concepts do not really exist; only ultimate realities really exist.*

*Speak in terms of concepts, but know in terms of ultimate realities."*

In insight meditation (*Vipassanā*) we must observe the ultimate mental and physical entities (*nāmā-rūpa*) arising and dissolving at tremendous rates and reflect on the three characteristics of existence - impermanence, suffering and non-self and intermittently on the characteristic of repulsiveness as well to develop ten insight knowledges and finally the fourfold Path - wisdom to be liberated from all suffering.

#### 5 Queen Khemā Devī: *Intoxicated with Beauty*

Khemā Devī, the chief queen of King Bimbisara, was young and very beautiful. She was very proud of her beauty. As the Buddha used to reproach beauty with the remark that a living body is as repulsive as a dead body, she did not want to see the Buddha.

King Bimbisāra became a Stream-Winner by just listening to the Buddha's sermon and he wanted his dear chief queen to become enlightened too. So he asked royal composers to compose a song describing the unique beauty of the Royal Veḷuvana Garden where the Buddha was residing. The song was sung frequently so that the Queen would become interested in the garden.

Finally she asked permission from the King to let

her visit the garden. The King gladly granted permission and he told the charioteer to bring the Queen back only after she had seen the Buddha. The Queen enjoyed the beautiful scenes of the garden and then asked the charioteer to take her back to the palace. The charioteer told her the message of the King.

So reluctantly she went to the Fragrance Chamber of the Buddha. But she was sure that the Buddha would be away on alms-round. She was wrong. The Buddha was waiting for her and he even created a very beautiful young maiden sitting by his side and fanning him.

As the maiden was more beautiful than the Queen, she attracted the Queen's attention. The Queen approached the Buddha, but she gazed at the maiden. The Buddha gradually made the maiden grow older and older until she was trembling like a very old, feeble woman. Finally she fell down and died.

The whole scene was a terrible shock to the Queen. The Buddha reminded her that youth and beauty are impermanent and they are destroyed by ageing and death. The Buddha delivered a suitable sermon when the Queen was enlightened as a Stream-Winner.

With the King's permission she became a bhikkhuni and later an Arahant, a Perfect One. She was named by the Buddha to be foremost in wisdom among bhikkhunis and to be his right-hand chief disciple.

She had actually fulfilled perfections to become a chief disciple for one hundred thousand world cycles.

Even then she was so conceited with her beauty in her last existence that she didn't want to see the Buddha. This is very surprising and to be conceited with beauty is also very frightening. Only because she had the chance to meet the Buddha could she get rid of her conceit and attain the noblest existence.

\* *All meeting and loving end in parting.*

*All youth and vitality end in ageing.*

*All living and enjoying end in dying.*

*Ven. Htut Khaung Sayadaw*



Becoming a Buddha at the foot of the Bodhi Tree

5

## THE MIND IS SUPREME

### 1 Real Creator: *Everything is Mind-made*

*“Cittena nīyati loko.”*

*“The mind rules the world.”*

Men think that they rule the world. They build towns and cities, roads and bridges, cars and trains, ships and aeroplanes, sky scrapers and twin-towers, science and technology, computers and space ships, arts and cultures, and that they control everything.

However, according to Abhidhamma, there are no men and women; only consciousness, mental factors and ultimate material entities exist. The combination of consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*) is called the mind.

The mind moves our hands and mouths to perform bodily actions and verbal actions. So it is actually the mind that makes everything. Even happiness and sorrow are mind-made.

Psychologists agree with the Buddha that the mind is the most powerful agent in the world. The creative power of the mind is unlimited - only the sky is the limit! Success or failure in life depends on the mind.

If one really has the will to become rich, one shall find ways and means and work hard so that one shall actually become rich. We have the saying: "*If there is a will, there is a way*". If one does not have the will to succeed in life, there will be no way to become successful.

Abraham Lincoln (1809-65) was born in a log cabin in the forest. His father was a wood-cutter. As a boy he had to leave school and help his father in the forest. But he had high ambition to become a leader. So he must acquire knowledge. He borrowed books from the houses near the forest and studied them at night. He passed the law examination and became a lawyer in 1837.

He was a good speaker with a large amount of knowledge. He became a U.S. representative from 1847 to 1849. As a Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in 1858, he made his mark in debates with Stephen A. Douglas. He became the 16th President of the United States in 1860. Thus he reached his goal. If one works hard one can become even a Fully Enlightened Buddha. So why can't one become an American President? Everything is mind-made.

## 2 **Wholesome and Unwholesome Minds:** *Creative and Destructive*

Abhidhamma describes four classes of minds: moral minds, immoral minds, resultant minds and functional minds.

Resultant minds arise as the result of our past karmas or volitional actions. They serve as rebirth consciousness, life-continuum, eye consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc. They keep us alive and they help us to know various sense objects.

Functional minds arise to perform their respective functions in cognizing sense objects and then they dissolve. Resultant minds and functional minds arise when they should and they dissolve leaving no kamma properties. We have no control over these minds.

Moral minds and immoral minds depend on our reflection and intention and they have kamma properties. Wise reflection gives rise to moral minds and unwise reflection produces immoral minds. Good volition or intention also produces moral minds and bad volition or intention gives rise to immoral minds.

Moral minds are harmless, faultless as they cause no harm to any one and they are creative; they produce good results. Immoral minds are harmful, faulty and destructive; they cause harm to some one and they produce bad results.

Moral minds are rooted in non-greed or generosity (*alobha*), non-hatred or goodwill (*adosa*) and non-delusion or wisdom (*amoha*). Thus to develop moral

minds we should practise generosity or alms-giving, develop goodwill or loving-kindness by observing moral precepts, and undertake meditation to develop concentration and wisdom.

Immoral minds are rooted in greed or craving (*lobha*), hatred or ill-will (*dosa*) and delusion or ignorance (*moha*). We perform immoral actions with immoral minds when we kill any sentient being, steal others's property, commit adultery, tell lies and consume intoxicating drinks and drugs.

During a moral action like offering food to a monk, billions of moral minds arise and dissolve, depositing billions of good kammās in the mental stream. Each of these good kammās have the potential to bear a new existence in a blissful abode, that is the human abode or a celestial abode.

Similarly during an immoral action like killing a chicken, billions of immoral minds arise and dissolve, depositing billions of bad kammās in the mental stream. Each of these bad kammās have the potential to bear a new existence in a woeful abode.

*So the art of living is to lead a pure, blameless moral life, avoiding immoral actions and performing moral actions as much as possible.*

Again there are four classes of moral minds - viz., sense sphere moral minds, fine-material moral minds, immaterial moral minds and supramundane moral minds.

When we perform meritorious deeds like alms-giv-



ing, observing moral precepts and undertaking meditation without attaining any jhāna, sense-sphere moral minds (*mahākusala cittas*) arise by billions leaving behind billions of sense-sphere moral kammās in the mental stream. These kammās will condition rebirth in sense-sphere blissful planes, that is the human realm and six deva realms.

If we undertake tranquillity meditation like mindfulness of breathing and attain fourfold jhānas, billions of fine-material moral minds (*rūpāvacara kusala cittas*) arise and dissolve whenever we develop jhāna-attainment, depositing billions of fine-material moral kammās in the mental stream. These kammās will condition rebirth in fine-material brahmā realms.

'Jhāna' is a state of mental absorption in which the mind remains calmly focused for hours on a single object. The object is the counter sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) that appears in meditation. The first jhāna is accompanied by five jhāna factors:

- Vitakka* - application of the mind to the sense object,
- Vicāra* - sustained application of the mind to the object,
- Pīti* - rapture or joy,
- Sukha* - pleasurable feeling,
- Ekaggatā* - unification of consciousness and mental factors to keep them focused on the object.

Since joy and pleasant feeling (*pīti, sukha*) are very strong in the *jhāna* state, the *jhāna* bliss is much superior to sensual pleasure. In the second *jhāna*, the first two *jhāna* factors are eliminated; so only *pīti, sukha, ekaggatā* are present.

In the third *jhāna* *pīti* is further eliminated and therefore only *sukha, ekaggatā* are present. In the fourth *jhāna*, *sukha* is changed to *upekkhā*, and only *upekkhā, ekaggatā* are present as *jhāna* factors.

The *jhāna* factors unite the consciousness and mental factors and keep them focused calmly on the counter sign.

Moreover, if we undertake *kaṣiṇa* meditation like earth *kaṣiṇa* and develop four *arūpāvarāra jhānas*, billions of immaterial moral minds (*arūpāvacara kusala cittas*) arise and dissolve whenever we develop *arūpa jhāna* attainment, depositing billions of immaterial moral *kammas* in the mental stream.

These *kammas* will condition rebirth in immaterial *brahmā* realms. *Arūpa brahmās* have no body; they have only mental entities.

Furthermore, after developing *jhāna* concentration if we undertake insight meditation strenuously and attain Path-wisdom and its Fruition-wisdom, we shall become noble persons (*Ariyas*) and can enjoy the everlasting bliss of *Nibbāna* as much as we like. There are four stages of Path-wisdom. The consciousnesses associated with this fourfold Path-wisdom are called Supramundane Moral Consciousnesses. They are the

highest and noblest moral consciousnesses. Their resultant consciousnesses are known as Supramundane Resultant Consciousnesses.

### 3 **Mental Culture:** *The Wise should tame the Mind*

*\* All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief: they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering follows him just as the wheel follows the hoof-print of the ox that draws the cart.*  
(Dhammapada 1)

*\* All mental phenomena have mind as their fore-runner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like his shadow which never leaves him.*

(Dhammapada 2)

*\* The mind is difficult to control; swiftly and lightly it moves and lands wherever it pleases. It is good to tame the mind, for a well-tamed mind brings happiness.*

(Dhammapada 35)

*\* The mind is very difficult to see, very delicate and subtle; it moves and lands wherever it pleases. The wise one should guard his mind, for a guarded mind brings happiness.*

(Dhammapada 36)

\* *Not a mother, nor a father, nor any other relative can do more for the well-being of one than a rightly-directed mind can.*

\* (Dhammapada 43)

\* *If the mind is well cultured and trained, it will bring about human happiness, celestial happiness and the ever-lasting Nibbāna bliss.*

#### 4 The Greatest Conqueror: *One who conquers his mind*

In Sāvātthi there was a very poor couple called 'Ekasāḍaka couple' because they had only one *sari*, that is a long cloth wrapped around their upper body to go out. On hearing the good news that the Buddha was going to deliver a sermon in Jetavana Monastery they agreed that the wife would go to listen the sermon at day time and the brahmin would go at night.

While the brahmin was listening to the Buddha's sermon, five types of joy arose in him and he wanted to offer something to the Buddha. The only thing he had that he could offer was the *sari*. Should he offer it? An unwholesome mind associated with stinginess (*macchariya*) stopped him. So the first watch of the night passed by.

In the middle watch of the night wholesome minds with strong faith (*saddhā*) arose in the Brahmin again urging him to offer the *sari* to the Buddha. Again the unwholesome, stingy minds stopped him.

In the last watch of the night he pondered: "If I cannot overcome the stingy minds I shall never escape from the four woeful abodes. Only if I put faith in

front, can I attain blissful existences. I shall offer my long cloth to the Buddha!”

He quickly folded the cloth neatly and placed it at the foot of the Buddha, saying “I offer you, Sir”.

Then he shouted: “I won. I won, I won.”

King Kosala of Sāvatti was listening to the Buddha’s sermon. When he heard the shout, he immediately enquired about it for he worried about his safety. When he came to know the old Brahmin’s conquest over his evil mind, he gave two saris to the brahmin. The old man immediately offered the saris to the Buddha.

The king again gave him four saris which he immediately offered to the Buddha again. The king doubled his gift to eight *saris*, sixteen *saris* and thirty-two *saris*.

The Brahmin kept only two *saris* for himself and his wife and offered the rest to the Buddha. Then the king gave him two woolen rugs worth one lakh rupees each. He kept one, hanging it up as a ceiling over the place where a monk partook of his meal at his house, and offered the other to the Buddha.

The king was delighted with the Brahmin’s generosity. He finally gave the Brahmin four elephants, four horses, four villages, four thousand silver coins, and so on.

The monks gathered at the Dhamma Hall and praised the Brahmin’s offering with a remark: “It’s so wonderful that the Brahmin gave alms today and got everything fourfold on the same day!”

The Buddha came and commented: “If the Brahmin could have offered his *sari* at the first watch of the night he would get everything sixteenfold. If he could have offered it in the middle watch of the night, he would get everything eightfold. Now he got everything fourfold because he could offer his *sari* only at the last watch of the night.”

- \* *Though one may conquer  
a thousand times a thousand men in battle,  
Yet he indeed is the noblest victor  
who conquers himself (i.e. conquers his defilements).*

*(Dhammapada 103)*



Delivering the first sermon, Dhammacakka, at Sarnath

6

## OUR GOOD AND BAD QUALITIES

### 1 Mental Factors: *Our innate Qualities*

Abhidhamma analyses the mind into 'consciousness' (*citta*) and 52 'mental factors' (*cetasikas*). There are 121 combinations between consciousness and various mental factors representing 121 types of mind.

Out of 52 mental factors 13 are neutral, 14 are immoral or unwholesome and 25 are beautiful or wholesome. All of them are powerful forces and they represent our innate good and bad qualities. They have great influences on the mind and consequently on all of us as well as on the whole universe.

## 2 Neutral Mental Factors: *They mean so much to us*

The 13 neutral mental factors associate with both wholesome and unwholesome minds. They represent some of our good qualities which mean so much to us.

### Seven Neutral Mental Factors that associate with all Minds

- (1) *Phassa* - contact; it makes the contact between the mind and the sense object;
- (2) *Vedanā* - feeling; it enjoys the taste of the sense object;
- (3) *Saññā* - perception; it perceives the features of the sense object;
- (4) *Cetanā* - volition or intension; it prompts its concomitants to perform their respective functions;
- (5) *Ekaggatā* - concentration; it unites the consciousness with its mental factors to remain focused on a sense object;
- (6) *Jīvitindriya* - psychic life; it sustains its concomitants to last throughout their life-span;
- (7) *Manasikāra* - attention or reflection; it pays attention to each sense object and directs the mental stream towards the object.

‘Contact’ (*phassa*) makes the contact between a sense object and the mind so that we can be aware of the sense object. It makes the impression of the sense object on the mind.

‘Feeling’ arises due to the contact between the



sense object and the mind. Feeling manifests itself as pleasant feeling, painful feeling and neutral feeling depending on whether the sense object is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, respectively.

Sensual pleasure is the enjoyment of pleasant feeling with *joy (pīti)* and with greed-rooted consciousness. *Pleasant feeling* and *joy* mean so much to us that we work hard everyday to get money to enjoy them, that is, to enjoy sensual pleasure.

‘Perception’ (*saññā*) takes note of the detailed features of each sense object and stores the data in the mental stream like a computer storing the data in its memory. Because of this memory we can remember what we have seen and what we have learnt. Otherwise we shall not remember any word to speak.

‘Volition’ (*cetanā*) acts on or prompts its concomitants (i.e. *citta* and *cetasikas*) to do their respective functions in order to accomplish each action. Since each action (called ‘*kamma*’ in Pāli) is accomplished by the effort of volition, the Buddha designates ‘volition’ as ‘*kamma*’.

So volition becomes very important again. The volition associated with moral roots (non-greed, non-hatred, non delusion) is termed ‘good *kamma*’ whereas the volition accompanied by immoral roots (greed, hatred and delusion) are designated as ‘bad *kamma*’.

‘Ekaggatā’, translated as ‘concentration’, unites consciousness and mental factors on a sense object to make the mind focus on the object. When it is developed to the *right concentration (sammā-samādhi)* the mind

is free from defilements and becomes pure and very powerful. It remains calmly focused on the object and becomes very peaceful. It radiates very bright and penetrative light with the help of which all surrounding objects become visible with closed eyes. It can penetratively observe internal organs like livers, lungs, heart, etc. It can further penetrate to the ultimate physical entities and mental entities to enable meditators to conduct insight meditation.

‘*Jīvitindriya*’, translated as ‘*psychic life*’ or ‘*vitality*’ infuses life into its concomitants so that they will remain alive throughout their life-span to perform their respective functions. Without *jīvitindriya* we cannot be alive.

‘*Manasikāra*’, translated as ‘*attention*’ or ‘*reflection*’, pays attention to each sense object that appears in the sense door (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) to know the sense object. It directs the mental stream towards the object. Wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*) about the sense object gives rise to wholesome minds and unwise reflection (*ayoniso manasikāra*) generates unwholesome minds.

### Six Neutral Mental Factors that associate with all Minds

- (1) *Vitakka* - initial application of the mind to the sense object;
- (2) *Vicāra* - sustained application of the mind to the sense object;

- (3) *Adhimokkha* - decision; it decides whether the sense object is good or bad;
- (4) *Vīriya* - effort or energy or exertion;
- (5) *Pīti* - rapture, joy or gladness;
- (6) *Chanda* - wish or will.

‘*Vitakka*’, translated as ‘*initial application*’, applies the mind to each sense object and initiates a thought about the object. If *vitakka* applies the mind to a friend, we shall think about that friend. In insight meditation *vitakka* applies the mind to ultimate realities so that we can investigate them. So *vitakka*, as the right thought, is also a factor of the Noble Eightfold Path.

‘*Vicāra*’ sustains the mind on the object by letting it examine the object again and again. It gives rise to ‘*discursive thinking*’. Like *vitakka* and *pīti* it is a *jhāna* factor.

‘*Adhimokkha*’ makes the decision with respect to the object. It is compared to a firm pillar owing to its unwavering state in making the decision. It opposes sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*).

‘*Vīriya*’, translated as ‘*effort*’ or ‘*energy*’, make us energetic, courageous and work hard so that we shall achieve success in every work of life. It is indeed a key to success. It has the characteristic of supporting or upholding its concomitants so that they do not slacken. It opposes sloth and torpor.

‘*Pīti*’, translated as ‘*joy*’ or ‘*rapture*’, is related to ‘*gladness*’ (*Pāmojja*). It is a precursor of ‘pleasant feel-

ing' (*Sukha*). 'Gladness' gives rise to 'joy' and 'joy' gives rise to 'pleasant feeling'. *Pīti* is developed in five stages which meditators will experience.

- (i) *Khuddaka pīti* - the thrill of joy which causes the flesh to creep ;
- (ii) *Khaṇikā pīti* - instantaneous joy like a flash of lightning ;
- (iii) *Okkantikā pīti* - the flood of joy like the breakers on a seashore, it gives the feeling of riding a boat on tides.
- (iv) *Ubbegā pīti* - up-lifting joy which may lift one to float in the air;
- (v) *Phāraṇā pīti* - suffusing joy which pervades the whole body like a full blown blader.

'Chanda' is the 'wish' or the 'will' to do something.

As the saying goes; 'If there is a will there is a way', even so a strong *chanda* or *will* shall bring success in everything we do willingly. It is also a key to success.

As the above neutral mental factors can take part both in wholesome and unwholesome actions, they are our reliable qualities if we can use them for good purposes.

### 3 Immoral Mental Factors:

#### *Our worst internal Enemies*

We should be well aware of the 14 immoral mental factors as they represent our worst internal enemies. They make us mean, low and wicked. Because of them people are wicked and doing evil actions.

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They are also called *worldly fires* that inflict us and burn us constantly. They are the main causes of all immoral and unjust actions and all suffering in the world. They will send us to hell fire after death.

The 14 immoral mental factors are divided into four sub-groups as follows.

(a) **Moha group** consists of 4 mental factors which associate with all immoral minds. They take part in all evil actions.

- (1) *Moha* or *Avijjā* - ignorance or delusion; ignorant of the true nature of sense objects;
- (2) *Ahirika* - moral shamelessness; not ashamed to perform immoral actions;
- (3) *Anottappa* - moral fearlessness; not afraid to perform immoral actions;
- (4) *Uddhacca* - restlessness; it makes the mind restless.

(b) **Lobha group** consists of 3 mental factors which associate with greed-rooted consciousness. They extend the round of rebirth.

- (5) *Lobha* or *Taṇhā* or *Rāga* - craving, attachment; it craves for sense objects and gets attached to them;
- (6) *Diṭṭhi* - wrong view;
- (7) *Māna* - pride, conceit.

(c) **Dosa group** consists of 4 mental factors which associate with anger-rooted consciousness. They are the most destructive elements.

(8) *Dosa* or *Paṭigha* - anger, hatred, ill will;

(9) *Issā* - jealousy, envy;

(10) *Macchhariya* - avarice, stinginess;

(11) *Kukkucca* - remorse, worry.

(d) The last three immoral mental factors

(12) *Thina* - sloth;

(13) *Middha* - torpor;

(14) *Vicikicchā* - sceptical doubt.

‘Ignorance’ or ‘delusion’ (*moha* or *avijjā*) is the leader of immoral mental factors. It blinds the mind not to see and understand the real nature of sense objects, the three characteristics of existence, *kamma* and its result, the causal relations of Dependent Arising and the four Noble Truths.

Because of the ignorance of *kamma* and its result, *moral shamelessness* (*ahirīka*) and *moral fearlessness* (*anottappa*) make wicked people not to be ashamed and not to be afraid of doing immoral actions. *Restlessness* (*uddhacca*) makes the mind very restless so that one cannot think seriously whether an action is proper or not.

Thus *ignorance*, *moral shamelessness*, *moral fearlessness* and *restlessness* always serve as the background forces for performing evil actions. They always associate with all immoral minds, so they are known as ‘*akusala-sādhāraṇa*’.

Because *ignorance* blinds the mind not to see the true nature of sense objects pertaining to the four char-

acteristics- *impermanence, suffering, not-self* and *repulsiveness* - people have the illusion that sense objects, that is, living beings and inanimate things, appear to be permanent, pleasant, self or person and beautiful.

This illusion or wrong vision makes '*greed*' or '*craving*' (*lobha*), '*wrong view*' (*diṭṭhi*) and '*pride*' or '*conceit*' (*māna*) to be very active. *Greed* craves for beautiful sense objects as well as sensual pleasure. The *wrong view* takes 'person, I, you' to really exist and makes one very selfish. The *pride* also looks at oneself as 'I' and becomes very conceited; thinking 'I am the best; I know most; I am most beautiful.'

'*Greed*', '*wrong view*' and '*conceit*' make men very intoxicated and forgetful about meritorious deeds. They are responsible for extending the life cycle or the round of rebirths that is known as *samsāra*. So they are collectively known as '*Papañca Dhamma*'.

Then we have the '*anger group*' of four mental factors comprising *anger* or *hatred* (*dosa*), *jealously* (*issā*), *stinginess* (*macchhariya*) and *remorse* (*kukkucca*). If any one of these factors arise in the mind anger-rooted mind arises accompanied by painful mental feeling.

'*Anger*' is the most destructive element in the world. Before it destroys others, it may destroy one first. As soon as *anger* arises, *ignorance* and its three associates also arise making the mind blind. So one can no longer think rationally; one may not hesitate to

commit killing, torturing others, destroying others' lives and properties, and using abusive language.

Inflated anger makes one angry, violent, cruel, ready to commit crimes. Depressed anger causes sadness, sorrow, grief, lamentation, depression, despair and fear to arise. Dissatisfaction, displeasure, worry, stress and strain also develop anger rooted minds accompanied by painful mental feeling. Persistent stress and strain will damage good health, giving rise to stomach ulcer, high-blood pressure, chest pain, back pain, etc.

'Jealousy' is objective. One feels jealous of others's success or prosperity. *Macchhariya* or *avarice* is subjective. It makes one unwilling to share one's room, one's house, one's property and one's knowledge with others.

Attachment to one's property by *greed* and *miserliness* to give away one's money or property to charity prevents one from giving alms. They are the causes for being reborn in the woeful state.

'Remorse' (*kukkucca*) has the characteristic of grieving over the evil that is done and the good that is not done. As it is useless to cry over spilt milk, so too it is of no use to repent or feel sorry about wrong doings. It is important to do what one should do now.

Jealousy, stinginess, remorse, worry and illwill make one unhappy for no good reason. Getting rid of them will make one immediately happy.

We should be careful not to be influenced by **three evil roots** - greed, anger and ignorance - which are



the hottest worldly fires and the causes of all suffering. Heart broken lovers like **Romeo** and **Juliet** committed suicide because they could not forbear these fires.

If we don't allow them to arise in the mind and get rid of them as soon as they arise, we shall commit no wrong and we shall live very happily.

\* *The extinction of greed (lobha), the extinction of hatred (dosa) and the extinction of delusion (moha); this is called Nibbāna.*

*(Samyutta Nikāya 381)*

#### 4 Beautiful Mental Factors:

##### *Our most precious Treasures*

Out of 25 beautiful mental factors, nineteen always associate with beautiful minds. They make the mind beautiful. They consist of

- (1) *Saddhā* - faith, confidence, clarity of mind;
- (2) *Sati* - mindfulness,
- (3) *Hirī* - moral shame,
- (4) *Ottappa* - moral dread,
- (5) *Alobha* - greedlessness, generosity;
- (6) *Adosa* - hatelessness, good will;
- (7) *Tatramajjhataṭṭā* - equanimity, mental balance.

and six pairs pertaining to *tranquillity (passaddhi)*, *agility (lahutā)*, *elasticity (mudutā)*, *adaptability (kammaññatā)*, *proficiency (pagaññatā)* and *uprightness (ujukatā)* of consciousness and mental factors.

They all make the mind clear, pure, calm, peace-

ful, light and upright. So we can live peacefully and happily if they arise in the mind, that is if we can develop moral minds.

Among this group of mental factors, 'faith' or 'confidence' is regarded to be the leader. If we can develop *faith* or confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha known as the Triple Gem, all this group of nineteen mental factors arise in the mind together, driving away all immoral mental factors. So the mind immediately becomes pure, calm, cool and peaceful. Thus 'faith' is compared to the unique ruby of the Universal Monarch.

Just as that unique ruby, when put in warm, dirty water, will cause all the dirt to subside and all the heat to escape and make the water instantly clear and cool, so also *faith* will eliminate all doubts, greed, anger and other mental defilements and purify and cool the mind instantly.

Now *faith* in Buddhism is not blind faith; it must be accompanied with rational knowledge and right understanding. Thus people who have *faith* in the Three Jewels (*Ti-ratana*) will pay homage to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha respectfully and perform meritorious deeds regularly. So they accumulate good karmas by billions every day. These good karmas will bear good fruits in many existences starting from this very existence.

Thus when the ogre *Āḷāvaka* asked the Buddha what was the most valuable treasure a man can possess, the Buddha replied that *faith* (*saddhā*) is the most

valuable treasure that a man can possess.

'Mindfulness' (*sati*) is also another most valuable treasure a man can possess. It is mindfulness of meritorious deeds such as remembering the good deeds one has performed and the meritorious deeds one has to perform, listening attentively to a sermon, focusing one's attention on the meditation object to be aware of it all the time, and being mindful at the six sense doors to note what one observes as 'seeing, seeing' or 'hearing, hearing', etc., in order to stop defilements from entering the mind.

Only such forms of mindfulness concerning wholesome matters are called *sati*. Such true mindfulness is also called '*appamāda*', meaning '*heedfulness, watchfulness or vigilance*'.

The Buddha reminded his disciples everyday:

*"Appamādena bhikkhava sampādettha."*

*"O bhikkus, don't forget to accomplish the meritorious deeds mindfully and diligently."*

Also when a bhikkhu administers moral precepts to lay devotees, he always reminds them to observe *sīla* diligently with due mindfulness. At the end of giving precepts he would say: "*Appamādena sampādettha*", meaning "*Don't forget to accomplish the meritorious deeds mindfully and diligently.*"

To live with mindfulness is a very precious way of living for one can acquire billions of good kammās every minute by being mindful. It will be best if one can live with the 'four Foundations of Mindfulness'

(*Mahāsatiṭṭhāna*).

‘Moral shame’ (*hirī*) and ‘moral dread’ (*ottappa*) are also very valuable for they prevent us from committing immoral actions. To feel ashamed to do evil is *hirī* and to feel frightened to do evil is *ottappa*.

Moral shame is evident in those who value their virtue and dignity. Moral dread is evident in those who respect their parents, teachers, friends and relatives.

*Hirī* and *ottappa* differentiate man from beast not to indulge in immoral acts such as sexual relations between mother and son or between father and daughter even at the time of very low civilization. So they are called ‘*Lokapāla Dhamma*’, that is the ‘Guardian of the World’.

*Saddhā*, *sati*, *hirī* and *ottappa* are included among the seven qualities of an upright person as well as among the seven treasures of an upright person. We must develop these four qualities together with strenuous effort to perform meritorious deeds, wide dhamma knowledge and wisdom to become a full-fledged upright person.

*Faith*, *effort*, *mindfulness*, *concentration* and *wisdom* represent the ‘*five spiritual powers*’ and the ‘*five spiritual faculties*’ that can organize the good forces to combat successfully against evil forces like the ‘*five hindrances*’ (*Nīvaraṇas*) and ‘*ten defilements*’ (*kilesās*).

‘*Greedlessness*’ or generosity (*alobha*), hatelessness or goodwill (*adosa*) and non delusion

or wisdom (*amoha* or *paññā*) are three moral roots. They are the roots of all wholesome deeds. They should be constantly developed by alms giving (*dāna*), observing moral precepts (*sīla*) and undertaking meditation (*bhāvanā*).

'Hatelessness' (*adosa*) also signifies *tolerance*, *forgiveness* and *love* or *loving-kindness*; all these are very noble and beautiful qualities.

We have the sayings: "Forgiveness is divine" and "God is love".

*Loving-kindness* (*mettā*), *compassion* (*karunā*), *sympathetic joy* (*muditā*) and *equanimity* (*tatramajjattatā* or *upekkhā*) represent four 'boundless states' or four 'sublime modes of living' (*Brahmavihāra*).

We should also develop them for they are very useful and very valuable in daily communication. Developing them means living in peace and happiness.

In practising loving-kindness, we meditate: "*Sabbe sattā averā hontu, avyāpajjhā hontu, anighā hontu, sukhi attanam parihārantu* = *May all living beings be free from enmity, free from mental suffering, free from bodily pain, well and happy.*"

In cultivating compassion, we meditate: "*Sabbe sattā dukkhā muñcantu* = *May all living beings be free from miseries.*"

For exercising sympathetic joy, we sincerely rejoice on the prosperity of beings and meditate: "*Sabbe sattā yathā laddha sampattito* = *May all living beings*

retain their gain and prosperity for a long time.”

In practising upekkhā, we maintain a balanced mind and meditate: “*sabbe sattā kammassakā = All living beings are as they are conditioned by their kamma.*”

\* *Mindfulness is the way to the Deathless (Nibbāna);  
Headlessness is the way to Death.  
Those who are mindful do not die;  
Those who are heedless are as if already dead.  
(Dhammapada 21)*

\* *The foolish and the ignorant give themselves  
over to negligence; whereas the wise treasure  
mindfulness as a precious jewel.  
(Dhammapada 26)*

\* *Hatred never ceases through hatred;  
it only ceases through loving-kindness.  
This is the eternal law. (Dhammapada 5)*

\* *When some one wrongs you,  
Put aside all resentment against him and say:  
“My mind shall never be disturbed;  
no angry words shall escape my lips.  
I will remain calm and friendly  
with loving thought and secret respite”.*

## 5 Eliminate Negative Qualities and Cultivate Positive Qualities

Remember that we possess negative, destructive qualities as well as positive, constructive qualities. They are our innate qualities, but they can be eliminated or cultivated to grow in strength. We can eliminate the negative qualities by developing the positive qualities.

To do this we must know their nature, the ways they influence the mind and the ways how they can be developed or eliminated.

If we are ignorant of the nature of our mind and how the mind works, the negative, destructive forces, that is immoral mental factors, will occupy and rule the mind, influencing the mind to perform immoral actions. So it will lead to immoral karmas, woeful rebirths and endless suffering.

We should be aware that if any one of the immoral mental factors, e.g. greed, anger, conceit or jealousy, arises in the mind, the mind will be unwholesome and unhealthy, upsetting our mental peace and happiness.

On the after hand, if one beautiful mental factor like faith, mindfulness, compassion or loving kindness arises in the mind, the mind will be beautiful and healthy, bringing mental peace and happiness right away.

Therefore identify and cultivate positive, constructive beautiful mental factors; identify and eliminate negative, destructive immoral mental factors.

Ignorance is the worst danger; knowledge or wisdom is the greatest positive power. We must develop the knowledge of understanding our mind and ourselves by studying Abhidhamma in order to achieve the best living and the best dying.

The systematic development of good positive qualities to eliminate the bad negative qualities totally is to undertake the Noble Threefold Training which represents the Noble Eightfold Path. *In this training morality is made the foundation, concentration is made the*

*body, and wisdom the head.*

After purifying one's morality and straightening one's view and understanding, one undertakes tranquillity meditation to develop the right concentration in order to attain the purity of the mind. The mind then becomes very powerful and radiates very bright and penetrative light.

With the help of this bright, penetrative light the meditator can undertake insight meditation properly to investigate the ultimate physical entities (28 rūpas) and the ultimate mental entities (*cittas* and *cetasikas*) and then to find out the causes that give rise to these ultimate entities. Then he can eliminate all wrong views and doubts about the psychophysical phenomena.

Then the meditator continues his insight meditation by repeatedly reflecting on the three characteristics of existence. After he has developed ten insight knowledges, the first Path-wisdom and its resultant Fruition-wisdom will arise, eliminating the wrong view (*ditṭhi*) and sceptical doubt (*viccekicchā*) completely. He now realizes Nibbāna and becomes a Stream Winner (*Sotāpanna*). For him the doors of the woeful abodes are closed for ever and he can enjoy the unique bliss of Nibbāna as much as he likes.

By undertaking insight meditation further he can develop the three higher Path wisdoms and their Fruition wisdoms which will eliminate all defilements totally. Then he becomes a Perfect One called Arahant who can enjoy the Nibbāna bliss for ever. This is the highest and noblest goal which a person can attain in this very life.





Māra's daughters tempting the Buddha

## KAMMA AND THE RIGHT VIEW

### 1 *Kamma: Secret, powerful Property of the Mind*

As it is extremely difficult to know the true nature of the mind, it is no wonder that the '*Law of kamma*', the secret wonderful property of the mind, is unknown to educationists, psychologists, scientists and philosophers.

Whether we know it or not, this natural law called the '*Law of Kamma*' operates independently in its own field, determining the fate and destiny of every living being in the universe.

It is a moral law without any law-giver. Understanding this law is crucial to lead a moral life, to feel ashamed and scared of committing immoral actions and to rejoice in performing meritorious deeds.

'*Kamma*' in Pāḷi or '*karma*' in Sanskrit means 'volitional action' or 'intentional deed'.

Abhidhamma explains that the mind moves our hands, mouths and other bodily parts through mind-produced corporeality. This phenomena can be observed by our mind-eye directly if we can develop the right mental concentration. So it is actually the mind which performs bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions.

Again in performing each action, the volition (*cetanā*)- the mental factor that associates with every mind - sets the motive or intention to do the action like killing a hen or paying homage to the Buddha, acts on its concomitants (consciousness and other mental factors) and prompts them to perform their respective functions in order to accomplish the action.

Since volition is responsible for bringing about each action, the Buddha identifies the volition with the action and designates the volition as '*kamma*'.

*"Cetanā-haṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi."*

*"O monks, it is the volition that I call kamma."*

*"Cetayittvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā."*

*"Prompted by volition one performs an action through body, speech or mind."*

## 2 How do kammās arise? Where are they stored up?

According to the '*Law of consciousness*' (*cittaniyāma*), more than a trillion minds arise and dissolve per wink or per snap of the fingers. So in performing an immoral action like killing a sentient being

or stealing others's property, many billions of immoral minds arise and perish. The volitions that associate with these immoral minds perform the immoral action and they are known as '*co-nascent kammās*' (*sahajāta kammās*). Because of them the immoral action is accomplished and it will bring its due bad effects.

For example, in killing a man, that man has to die because of the immoral action and his wife and children will have to grieve miserably. The killer himself will be arrested, tried in court and may be sentenced to death. These are the immediate bad results of that immoral action.

Now the worse results will follow sooner or later. The many billions of volitions which bring about the action dissolve soon after they have arisen, depositing their property in the form of immoral '*potential kammās*' in the mental stream. They are similar to plant seeds which are left behind after ripe fruit disintegrate.

We learn in basic science that energy can neither be created nor destroyed according to the '*Law of Conservation of Energy*'. We can use energy to perform an action, but that energy cannot be lost; it must be converted to another form.

Similarly the energy of billions of volitions in performing an action must not be lost. It is stored up in the mental stream as '*potential kammās*' (*nānakkhanika kammās*).

In performing a moral or wholesome action too billions of volitions associated with billions of moral minds arise and perish leaving behind billions of moral

'potential kammās' in the mental stream.

### 3 How do Potential Kammās bear Results?

Potential kammās bear results just like the seeds of plants do.

*"Sadisaṃ pākāṃ janeti."*

"Kamma will produce results similar to it."

*"Yādisaṃ vappate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ."*

"As you sow the seed so shall you reap the fruit."

*"Kālyānakārī kalyāṇaṃ*

*pāpakārīca pāpakaṃ."*

"Who does good receives good;

Who does bad receives bad.

At the time of Gotama Buddha, **Dhamma Dinnā** was an Arahant and she was foremost among the Buddha's female disciples in preaching the Dhamma skilfully. She told her companions that she was the housewife of a brahmin in one of her past existences.

One day a close friend of her husband came and she was asked by her husband to serve good food. As she could not get meat from the market, she killed a little lamb bred at her house by cutting its throat and cooked its meat. The guest and her husband were very pleased with good food and they thanked her.

For the evil action of killing the lamb the housewife, on her death, was burnt in hell for a long time. When she escaped from hell she was reborn as animals as many existences as there were hairs in the body of the lamb she killed and in every existence she was killed

by having her throat cut. For killing a sentient being just once, she was killed more than a million times in return. So the results of unwholesome kammās are extremely terrible.

**Amba Pālī**, the most beautiful courtesan in Vesālī kingdom, became an Arahant in her old age. As she gained the supernormal power of remembering her former existences she told her companions that she had met three Buddhas. At the time of Phussa Buddha she offered food to the Buddha and bhikkhus and made a wish that she would be exceptionally beautiful in her every future existence.

At the time of Sikhī Buddha she became a young bhikkhunī. She accompanied the bhikkunīs of her monastery one evening to pay homage to a pagoda. While they were walking on the Pagoda platform she stepped on a patch of saliva with phlegm and immediately remarked: "Which courtesan has spat this saliva?"

As no one heard her remark, she seemed to have insulted no one. But it was an elder Arahant who had unintentionally spat the saliva when she coughed and she did not know about it. So when the young bhikkhunī remarked: "Which courtesan has spat the saliva?" it amounted to accusing the elder Arahant to be a courtesan.

So she committed a serious wrong speech of using abusive language against an Arahant. For this evil action she had to suffer in hell for many years. After escaping from hell she had to serve as beautiful courtesans for ten thousand existences culminating in the

existence of Amba Pāli. So dreadful is the results of an immoral action!

As much as the results of bad kammās are very terrible and frightening, the effects of good kammās are very blissful and reliable. At the time of Gotama Buddha there was a well-known bhikkhu called **Saraṇa Gamana Thera** who became an Arahant at the age of seven years.

In one of his past existences one asaṅkheyya (aeon) and one hundred thousand world cycles ago he was a poor man looking after his blind parents. When Anomadassī Buddha appeared in the world, he could not go to the Buddha, but he took refuge in the Triple Gem from a chief disciple of the Buddha. He revered the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha throughout his life and so accumulated many billions of good kammās.

When he died he was reborn in Tāvātimsā realm. In his countless existences for an asaṅkheyya and one hundred thousand world cycles he was reborn again and again as sense-sphere celestial beings and human beings, but never as a woeful being. He was born as king of *devas* in Tāvātimsā Realm for 80 existences and as Universal Monarch in the human world for 75 existences.

In his last existence he was a rich man's son at the time of Gotama Buddha. At the age of seven he was playing with his companions and they ran into a monastery. A monk asked them to recite after him: "*Buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ*

*gacchāmi, Saṃghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*" At the end of the recitation he gained Arahantship - the highest attainment in life!

#### 4 Kammās rationally explain the Phenomena of Life

*Sabbe sattā Kammaṣṣakā kammaṃ satte vibhajjati.*  
*All beings are owners of their kammās;*  
*kammās divide beings into lowness and excellence.*

Of the many billions of kammās in our mental streams good kammās will bear good results and bad kammās will produce bad effects whenever they have the opportunity. These phenomena beautifully explain the ups and downs of life. As Shakespeare says: "*Life is not a bed of roses, it is full of ups and downs.*"

When a bad kamma has the chance to bear result, many other bad kammās also have the opportunity to produce their bad results. This fact also explains the saying: "*Misfortune never comes alone.*"

We also observe that some good people have to suffer while some bad people prosper. We should bear in mind that good kamma will never bear bad results and that bad kamma will never produce good effects.

If present good kammās do not get the chance to bear good results while previous bad kammās are having the chance to bear fruit, then good people may have to suffer temporarily. On the other hand, if the present bad kammās do not get the chance yet to bear bad results while previous good kammās are producing their good effects, then bad people may prosper for some time.

So long as bad kammās do not yet bear their bad results the doer can be happy; but when they bear their bad results, the doer will suffer miserably.

\* *The evil-doer grieves here and hereafter;  
he grieves in both the worlds.*

*He laments and is afflicted,  
recollecting his own impure deeds.*

*(Dhammapada 15)*

\* *The doer of good rejoices here and hereafter;  
he rejoices in both the worlds.*

*He rejoices and exults,  
recollecting his own pure deeds.*

*(Dhammapada 16)*

## 5 Dying : The most important Time

To have a good dying is as important as having a good living. To die with a serene and undeluded mind is much more important than to die with complicated and deluded mind. The kamma that is done or that appears near the time of death will determine our next existence.

The Buddha classified the kammās in the mental stream into four kinds with respect to the priority in bearing results for producing the next existence.

### (1) Weighty kamma - *Garuka kamma*

This kamma is of such powerful moral weight that it can neither be stopped nor replaced by any other kamma as the determinant of the next rebirth. It will certainly produce its result to give birth to the next existence.



Bad weighty kammās include the five most heinous crimes, namely: parricide, matricide, the murder of an Arahant, the wounding of a Buddha, and maliciously creating a schism in the Saṅgha. A permanent wrong view which denies kamma and its result is also included in the bad weighty kammās.

On the wholesome side the fine-material wholesome kammās produced from rūpāvacara jhānas and the immaterial wholesome kammās produced from arūpāvacara jhānas are good weighty kammās. Supramundane wholesome kammās, that is the attainment of the Path Wisdom, is the best as it closes the doors of the four woeful abodes for ever.

The Buddha's ambitious cousin Devadatta wounded a toe of the Buddha by rolling a stone down the hill to kill him and also caused a schism in the Saṅgha. Because of these heinous deeds he lost his psychic powers and was burnt by Avīci hell fire. He was pulled down to Avīci hell by the fire.

King Ajātasattu killed his father, King Bimbisāra, to become King. He could not enjoy royal luxury for he could not sleep. As soon as he fell asleep hell people would impale his body with spears. He could not attain enlightenment, although he had accumulated enough virtue to be enlightened, when he listened to the sermon preached by the Buddha, because the evil kamma created an insurmountable obstruction.

Later, though he performed many great meritorious deeds including the sponsorship to the First Great Buddhist Council and erection of a great stupa enshrining

ing the Buddha's relics, he did not escape the re-birth in hell due to his heinous crime.

(2) **Near-death Kamma - *Āsanna kamma***

This is a potent kamma done or remembered shortly before death. In the absence of any weighty kamma, this death-proximate kamma will generally take on the role of generating rebirth because of its great potency due to proximity.

If a person of bad character performs a good deed just before dying or remembers a good deed he has done earlier, he will receive a fortunate rebirth for that good deed will have the chance to bear results.

On the other hand, if a good person dwells on an evil deed done earlier, or performs an evil deed just before death, the evil deed will have the chance to bear fruits and he will undergo an unhappy rebirth.

For this reason it is very important to arrange for one's parents or beloved ones to perform meritorious deeds just before they die, or to remind a dying person of his good deeds or to urge him to reflect on the Buddha's virtue during his last moments.

Even though a bad person may attain a happy rebirth on account of a good death-proximate kamma, this does not mean that he will escape the fruits of the bad deeds he has committed during the course of life. When they meet with favourable conditions, these bad kammass too will produce their due results.

**King Duṭṭhāgāmaṇi** of Sri Lanka made his younger brother crown prince. The friends of the crown prince persuaded the prince to seize power. So

one day they unexpectedly attacked the king with their swords. The king had to run away with his horse together with his personal attendant.

They went into a forest and rested on a hill. The king became hungry and the servant said that he brought a bowl of food. The king divided the food into four portions with his dagger. One portion was for donation, another portion was for him and the remaining two for the servant and the horse.

The king had the habit of donating food to some monks before he ate since he was a child. He asked the servant to invite monks to come and accept food from him. The servant remarked that he could not see anybody around them. But on being prompted by the king he shouted: "If there are any monks around here, please come and accept food from the king."

A monk came through the air. The king was very much delighted. He offered not only the portion of food for donation but also his portion. When he looked at his servant and the horse, they also nodded their heads, giving the consent to donate their shares as well. So the king offered all the food to the monk.

The monk with supernormal power went through the air and multiplying the food with supernormal power he offered enough food to each of one thousand monks. The king was very satisfied with his offering for some time and then he felt hungry again. He made a mental wish that the monk would give him some left-over food.

At that moment an alms-bowl came through the air. The king took it and found it full of food! He shared the food with his servant and the horse. After washing the bowl he let it go and it went through the air to its owner. That was indeed a red-letter day for the king.

Later on King Duṭṭhāgāmani gathered his supporters and fought against the crown prince. He easily won and regained the throne. He was a great king. He built many temples and pagodas including the great pagoda called Mahācetiya. He also had to fight against Tamil rebels for twelve long years killing many of them.

When he was old and laid in bed with illness, he wondered where he would be reborn after death. As he had killed many enemies would he be cast into the woeful state? Or, as he had donated a large amount of his wealth to the cause for propagating the Sāsana - the teachings of the Buddha, would he be reborn in a celestial realm?

Elder monks assured him that he would gain celestial rebirth after his death since his great meritorious deeds far out-weighed his immoral deeds. Still he worried about his future and longed to see his great comrade, Abhaya, who fought bravely by his side to win the battle. Abhaya refused the post of an army general; instead he asked for permission to become a monk, saying he had another battle to fight - the battle against defilements. He was granted permission by the king.

“My comrade fought by my side throughout the war against the insurgents because he knew we would win the war. But now I am fighting against death. I am sure to lose this battle. So my comrade does not stand

by my side now," thought the king.

At that moment Abhaya Thera came through the air and stood by his side. "Your Majesty, I am by your side. You shall also win this battle against death. You have performed many outstanding meritorious deeds. Remember these deeds and rejoice in your marvellous achievement."

The king was heartened and delighted. He let the royal record of his meritorious deeds be read. When the story of his offering of food to the monk with supernatural power in the forest was read, he felt so happy that he thought about that event again and again. During this time he passed away and was reborn in a celestial realm. This illustrates how a good kamma remembered at the time of near death had the chance to condition the next rebirth.

### The Near-death Sign can change

Another remarkable story was the story of Venerable Sona's father also in Sri Lanka. Venerable Sona resided on Sona Giri Hill and attained arahantship through his strenuous effort.

His father, however, made a living by hunting. Only when he was too old to go hunting did he become a monk in his son's monastery. Not long after that he fell ill and had a vision that hell hounds were coming up the hill to bite him. This was the near-death sign called the *sign of destiny* produced by his habitual kamma of hunting which was about to condition his rebirth in hell when he died. He was frightened and asked his son to drive away the hounds.

His son, being an Arahant, immediately knew that his father was having a near-death sign to cast him down to hell. He asked his disciples to gather flowers quickly and spread them on the pagoda in the monastery compound. Then they carried the old monk together with his bed to the pagoda.

Venerable Sona reminded his father to pay homage to the pagoda and to rejoice in the offering of flowers on his behalf. The old monk calmed down, paid homage to the pagoda and took delight in the offering of flowers to the pagoda on his behalf.

At that moment his sign of destiny changed. He told his son, "Your beautiful step-mothers come to take me along. Shall I go with them?"

"Yes, you should go with them."

The son knew that celestial beings had come to take his father along with them. He was satisfied with the result of his effort.

This is a very good way of repaying the gratitude we owe to our parents.

### (3) Habitual kamma - *Āciṅṅa kamma*

This is a volitional action, either good or bad, that one performs regularly or it may be a volitional deed which is performed once and is recollected frequently. In the absence of a weighty kamma and a near-death kamma, the habitual kamma generally assumes the role of generating the next rebirth.

This is the kamma that we should exert the effort to perform regularly to prepare for our death. We can

choose any meritorious deed we like - alms-giving, observing moral precepts, or meditating.

For a hunter hunting is his habitual kamma. For a lady teacher teaching is her habitual kamma. Nevertheless, we should choose an additional meritorious deed we like most and perform it regularly.

If we perform it regularly it becomes a habit, and "*habit is the second nature*". When it becomes our second nature, we shall perform it spontaneously and joyfully in our daily routine. It will generate satisfaction and happiness whenever we think of it, and at the time of death, it will become near-death kamma and bear result to generate a good rebirth.

One of the best kammās to be used as habitual kamma is "*Recollection of the attributes of the Buddha*" (*Buddhānussati*) or "*Radiating loving-kindness*" (*Mettā bhāvanā*) to all living beings.

To perform *Buddhānussati* we should visualize our favourite Buddha statue and recollect any one of the Buddha's attributes such as "*Arahāṃ, arahāṃ*" attentively and repeatedly.

We must understand well the meaning of the attribute and venerate the Buddha earnestly while we are recollecting the attribute. This is also a good way of accumulating good kammās. *Buddhānussati* is regarded as one of the most sacred and most beneficial meditation.

A rich man's son by the name of **Maṭṭhakuṇḍalī** and an old poor lady called **Caṇḍalī** in Rājagraha City, who were destined to be reborn in hell because they

had performed no meritorious deeds, attained celestial rebirth in Tāvātimsā heaven on their death as they had the chance to worship the Buddha in their last moments.

So at the time of near-death, if we can recollect the Buddha's attributes, we shall surely attain a blissful rebirth. For those who make Buddhānussati or Mettā bhāvanā as their habitual kamma, they will remain calm and serene near death, automatically doing their meditation. They can face death with courage for they are assured of blissful rebirth.

#### (4) Unspecified kamma - *Kaṭattā kamma*

This is any other volitional deed, not included in the aforementioned categories, which has been done earlier and forgotten, but is potent enough to take on the role of generating rebirth. This type of kamma becomes operative when there is no kamma of the other three types to exercise this function.

Now at the time of near death the many billions of kmmas that are being conveyed from one mind to another in our mental streams will compete with one another to have the chance to bear results. If a weighty kamma is present, it will win the competition and condition the next rebirth.

If weighty kamma is absent, which is often the case, then death-proximate kamma will take the role of regenerating kamma to condition the next existence. If the near-death kamma is not present, then habitual kamma will appear as near-death kamma and bear its results.

When the above three types of kmmas are ab-



sent, then an unspecified kamma will emerge to play the role of reproductive kamma in order to condition the arising of the next rebirth. A good example of this case is Queen Mallikā.

**Queen Mallikā**, the chief queen of King Kosala of Sāvatti, performed many outstanding meritorious deeds together with the king. They won the competition between the royal family and the citizens of Sāvatti in making superior offering to the Buddha.

But at one time when she was about to take a bath, a dog came into the bath-room, and she enjoyed sexual pleasure with the dog. When she came out of the bath-room, the dog followed her. This was noticed by the king who was looking out of the window and he questioned her immediately.

She vehemently lied to the king saying that the king had a distorted vision for she came out alone. The king believed his beloved wife and excused her.

But this immoral action came to her mind at her death moment and played the role of unspecified kamma. This immoral kamma sent her to Avīci hell on her death. Luckily she had to suffer in Avīci hell for only seven human days. Then she was rescued by her strong good kammas and she was reborn in Tusitā heaven.

We should not however allow our fate and destiny to be manipulated by unspecified kammas. As there are many billions of unspecified kammas, both wholesome and unwholesome, we cannot expect that a good unspecified kamma will perform the rebirth-generative

function. We should shape our destiny as we desire by developing a wholesome weighty kamma or a good habitual kamma while there is still time to do.

## 6 Death : How will it come?

What is death? Abhidhamma defines death as the cutting off of psychic life (*jīvitindriya*), heat (*usma=tejo dhātu*) and consciousness (*viññāna*) of one individual in a particular existence.

But death is not the complete annihilation of a being. Death is the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon. Death in one place means rebirth in another place just as the sun-set at one place means the sun-rise at another place. So long as the causes for the next existence are not extinct life will go on.

Death may come in one of four ways. The four-fold arrival of death may be compared to the four ways of extinguishing a lighted oil-lamp.

The flame of an oil-lamp may go out when:

- (i) The wick burns out,
- (ii) the oil burns out,
- (iii) both the wick and the oil burn out, or
- (iv) the wind blows suddenly or the light is put out purposely even though the wick and the oil still remain.

In the same way a person may die in one of the following ways:

- (i) death due to the expiration of the age limit,
- (ii) death due to the extinction of the productive kammic force,
- (iii) death due to the expiration of both the age-

- limit and the reproductive kamma, or  
(iv) death due to the intervention of a destructive kamma.

It is sudden death such as the death due to car-accident or suicide.

## 7 The Signs near the Time of Death: *Speculate future Existence*

When the reproductive kamma that conditions the present existence to arise and to continue existing is about to be exhausted, the many billion kammās in the mental stream compete with one another to have the chance to produce the next existence. One of the kammās will surely win the competition. By the power of this kamma, one of the following three signs presents itself at the appropriate sense doors.

- (i) **Kamma object** - the wholesome or unwholesome successful kamma that will produce the next rebirth; it appears at the mind door.
- (ii) **The Sign of Kamma** - the scene, the sound, the smell, the gun, the knife, pagoda, etc., which were or are observed or used during the performance of the successful kamma; the sign of present kamma appears in one of the five sense doors whereas the sign of past kamma appears in the mind door.
- (iii) **The sign of destiny** - the scene connected with the place of the next rebirth such as the mother's womb, houses, celestial mansions, hell scenes or persons that one is to encounter; this sign usually appears in one of the five sense

doors.

However fast a person may die, the near-death sign will always appear. Soon after the appearance of this sign the person usually dies. By judging the near-death sign we can predict whether the person is reborn in a blissful or woeful plane.

## 8 The Arising of the new Existence - *No break in the mental stream*

As soon as death consciousness dissolves in the present existence, the rebirth consciousness, its associated mental factors and the kamma-born corporeality (*kammaja rūpa*) that are produced by the successful kamma arise in the new existence. These five aggregates of existence (*pañca khandhas*) consisting of the kamma-resultant consciousness, associated mental factors and kamma born corporeality will continue to arise at every conscious moment until the new productive kamma is exhausted. So is the way a new existence arises and comes to an end.

The first resultant consciousness serves as rebirth consciousness. Subsequent resultant consciousnesses serve as life continuum. The last resultant consciousness is called death consciousness. All these resultant consciousnesses are produced by the new productive kamma. They are alike and they take the same object which is the near death sign of the immediate past existence.

Since the mental stream is not cut off at death and it continues from the death consciousness of the present

existence to the rebirth-consciousness of the next existence, all potential karmas, all perceptions or knowledge, temperament, interest or natural bent will be transmitted from the death consciousness of the present existence to the rebirth consciousness of the next existence just as these properties are being transmitted from one mind to another in the present existence.

Although the present existence dies along with death consciousness and the new existence begins with rebirth consciousness, the mind continuum is just one and the same and it flows on from one existence to another. So we conventionally regard the new existence as the continuation of the old existence and the two existences to represent the same person.

So if a person is good natured, intelligent and interested in music in the present existence, he will be again good natured, intelligent and interested in music in the next existence. On the other hand if another person is short tempered, dull and interested in sports in the present existence, he will be again short tempered, dull and interested in sports in the next existence. There are strong evidences to this general statement.

As the interest or attitude of a person may change in the present existence due to a change in circumstances or other causes, so too his interest or attitude may change in the next existence.



Passing away at the age of 80 at Kusinagara

8

## THE BEST ADVICE FOR LIVING AND DYING

### 1 The Right View: *The Guiding Torch in Life*

As the human mind is normally blinded by ignorance (*avijjā*) and defiled by defilements (*kilesās*) human beings cannot see the world as it really is. What they see is the illusive world in which living beings are struggling for their survival, finding means to provide them with food, clothing and shelter and to enjoy sensual pleasure as much as possible.

As ignorancé (*avijjā*) gives them the illusion that 'self' exists, they are more or less selfish with little consideration for others. Giving priority to self enjoyment, they commit various types of immoral actions - murder, theft, robbery, rape, lying, cheating, gambling, sex-trafficking, etc., which amount to crimes. So they need

governments, laws and law enforcement to prevent them from committing crimes.

The Interfax news agency cited a children's organization report on October 22, 2004 that over 30,000 children and teenagers went missing in Russia each year due to children smuggling and that 2000 children and teenagers committed suicide each year.

A government study in Britain revealed on November 22, 2005 that half of all children under the age of 11 had been bullied in school. The Metropolitan Police of London reported on May 12, 2006 that nineteen women were rescued in sex-trafficking raids across the country.

Again if we look at the world's richest country like the United States of America, this country leads in mental illness globally with 46 percent of Americans suffering from mental disorders ranging from anxiety and depression to alcohol and drug abuse. About 25 percent of all Americans met the criteria for having mental illness, and 25 percent of these people had a "serious" disorder that significantly disrupted their ability to function day to day, the Washington Post reported on June 8, 2005.

On October 22, 2005 a passerby saw a woman take off her three children's clothing and throw them into water from the end of the fishing pier near one of San Francisco's most popular tourist areas. The children were aged 6 years, 2 years, and six months. All died almost instantly. Their mother who threw them into the chilling water was Lashaun Harris, 23.

“These are senseless inexplicable things that are beyond the pale of imagination. It makes you, frankly, sick to your stomach to think you live in a society where things like this could have happened”, said San Francisco Mayor to reporters at the water front where the crime occurred.

Why did crimes and mental disorder like the above cases, and social problems and political problems arise in the modern world? The root causes of all these crimes and problems are clearly the mental defilements - the animal nature - that thrive in the minds of worldlings.

Abhidhamma knowledge is most crucial to subdue these defilements and develop the beautiful qualities - the real human nature - so that all human beings could live in peace and harmony as brothers and sisters with understanding and loving-kindness.

The right understanding of the human nature, the nature of saṃsāra - the round of rebirths, the causal relations of Dependent Arising (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) and the natural law of kamma that shapes individual fate and destiny should be the guiding torch in life to lead a pure, noble, peaceful and beneficial life.

- \* *The wrong view (micchādiṭṭhi) that ignores kamma and its results is most blame-worthy. It is the cause of all evil actions. It caused unarisen evil actions to arise and it multiplies the evil deeds that have arisen. It is the main cause that conditions woeful rebirth to arise after death.*



- \* *The right view (sammādiṭṭhi) that believes in kamma and its results is most praiseworthy. It is the cause of all moral actions. It causes unarisen moral actions to arise and it multiplies the moral deeds that have arisen. It is the main cause that conditions blissful rebirth to arise after death.*

*(Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta)*

## 2 The best Advice ever given to Mankind

- \* *To avoid all evil, to do good,  
and to purify one's mind -  
this is the advice of all the Buddhas.*

*(Dhammapada 183)*

This is a simple but very profound advice given by all the Buddhas. In fact, it is the best advice ever given to mankind. It points out the right way of living, the purpose of living, and the means for attainment of the highest gain in life.

To abide by that golden advice of all the Buddhas, we must first know what is evil and what is good. As Socrates has remarked, if people certainly know what is evil and what is good, no body will turn his back against the good and follow the evil.

According to the Buddha an action is good if it is faultless and blameless, that is it does not cause any harm to anyone, and it is beneficial as it brings good results to the doer as well as to others.

On the contrary an action is bad if it is faulty and blame-worthy, that is, it causes harm to someone, ei-

ther to oneself or to others, and it brings bad results to the doer as well as to others.

According to this definition there are three bodily evil actions: (1) killing any sentient being, (2) stealing others's properties and (3) committing sexual misconduct.

Furthermore, there are four evil verbal actions: (2) telling lies, (2) slandering or talking ill of others, (3) using harsh and abusive language, and (4) talking vainly or speaking frivolous talk that brings no benefit to the speaker as well as to listeners.

In addition there are three types of evil thoughts: (1) covetousness or thinking of getting other's property unlawfully, (2) ill-will or evil thought to destroy other's life and property, and (3) wrong view taking that kamma and kamma-result do not exist.

These ten kinds of evil actions or evil conduct are called "*Akusalakammapha*" - accomplishment of evil kamma that will lead to woeful rebirth.

Of the ten kinds of evil actions, the wrong view is the most serious and most blame-worthy. So it is very important to have the right view believing in kamma and its results.

Avoiding the above ten immoral actions amounts to ten moral actions. Thus three bodily good actions are (1) abstaining from killing any sentient being, (2) abstaining from stealing other's property, and (3) abstaining from committing sexual misconduct.

Furthermore four verbal good actions are (1) ab-

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staining from telling lies, (2) abstaining from slandering or talking ill of others, (3) abstaining from using harsh speech, and (4) abstaining from vain talks.

In addition there are three good thoughts: (1) abstaining from covetousness or from the evil thought of getting other's property unlawfully, (2) abstaining from ill-will or the evil thought of destroying other's life and property, and (3) the right view.

These ten kinds of moral actions or good conduct are called "*kusalakamma*patha" - accomplishment of good kamma that will lead to blissful rebirth.

The Buddha based his definitions of good and evil on the basis of kamma and its results. Good actions are performed by moral minds giving rise to good kammās and good results. Evil actions are performed by immoral minds giving rise to bad kammās and bad results.

In practice to avoid all evil, to do good and to purify the mind, lay persons observe five moral precepts of *Pañca Sīla*, thereby they avoid all ten evil actions, simultaneously accomplish ten moral actions, and purify their minds from gross, violent defilements called *vītikkaṃa kilesās* which are responsible for committing evil actions.

The absence of gross, violent defilements from the mental stream brings instant happiness to the mind. Thus the Buddha said to Venerable Ananda: "*Ananda, the faultless and noble practice of morality has the result of mental peace and happiness and the effect of suffusing peace and happiness to the mind*"

The '*faultless happiness*' is called '*anavañña sukha*'. It is superior to sensual pleasure.

### 3 Great Benefits of Observing Pañca-Sīla

The benefits obtained from observing five moral precepts of Pañca-Sīla is much greater than alms-giving. Since a moral life is accompanied by great virtue, upright persons adore Pañca-sīla as much as they adore their life. Observing Pañca-Sīla diligently will bring the following benefits.

- (1) Since the bodily and verbal actions of a person who diligently observes Pañca-sīla are blameless and praiseworthy, he possesses the best moral character. Good character is the most valuable possession of a person.
- (2) Since he avoids doing harm to any living being, he brings peace and happiness to all living beings including himself. In fact, if all people observe Pañca-Sīla adoringly, we shall attain '*World Peace*' immediately.
- (3) Since he can prevent gross and aggressive defilements such as greed (*lobha*) and anger (*dosa*) from arising in his mind, he enjoys peace and happiness instantly. This internal peace can lead to world peace.
- (4) Loving-kindness and compassion bloom in a person of good morality or good virtue. So his face is calm, serene, and adorable. People love and respect him. So he can join any assembly of people with grace and boldness.
- (5) Pañca-sīla represents the most beautiful and at-

tractive dress as well as the best perfume.

\* *The fragrance of flowers travels not against the wind, nor does the fragrance of sandal-wood or perfumes; but the fragrance of the virtuous travels against the wind pervading every direction.*

(*Dhammapada* 54)

(6) A virtuous person, because of his mindfulness and diligence, will succeed in business and in amassing riches.

(7) His good fame will spread far and wide.

(8) In *Asaṅkheyya Sutta* the Buddha advises a person to keep pure morality if he wishes to win the adoration of his companions, great wealth, good fame and high position.

*“Ijjhati bhikkhave Sīlavato cetopanidhi visuddhattā”*  
*“All the wishes of a person with pure virtue will be fulfilled, because his mind is pure.”*

(9) A person of pure morality will be free from four types of danger:

(i) he is free from the danger of being blamed by himself;

(ii) he is free from the dangers of being blamed or dispraised by others;

(iv) he is free from the danger of being punished by the law; and

(iv) he will be free from the danger of being re-born in a woeful abode after death.

(10) He will be free from delusion and perplexity at the time of death, remembering the meritorious

deeds he has done.

(11) He will be reborn in a blissful abode after death.

Everyone should willingly and diligently observe the moral precepts of Pañca-Sīla as the benefits are very great and the evil consequences are terrible if one breaks the precepts and commits immoral actions.

\* *Lead a righteous life;  
lead not a wicked life.  
The righteous live happily  
both in this world and the next.*  
(Dhammapada 169)

\* *Good is virtue until life's end,  
good is faith that is steadfast,  
good is the acquisition of wisdom,  
and good is the avoidance of evil.*  
(Dhammapada 333)

#### 4 Systematic Purification of the Mind

In order to avoid evil to a greater extent, to do greater good and to purify the mind totally the Buddha prescribes the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of the Noble Threefold Training: the Training of Morality, the Training of Concentration and the Training of Wisdom.

#### 5 Training of Morality (*Sīla Sikkhā*)

Higher morality called *Upasatha sīla* (Sabbath Precepts) consisting of eight or nine precepts is usually observed by lay persons in undertaking the Noble Threefold Training.

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In observing Uposatha Sīla one has to abstain from all sexual activity and from taking food after midday till dawn the next day. One also must abstain from enjoying music, songs, dances, and from using perfumes, cosmetics, high or luxurious seats and beds. The purpose of these abstinences is to purify the mind from lust and other gross defilements.

The observation of the nine precepts of Navaṅga-Sīla is undertaken as follows.

1. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇi sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from killing any sentient being.

2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from stealing other's property.

3. *Abrahma-cariyā veramaṇi sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from the ignoble practice of sexual intercourse.

4. *Musāvādā veramaṇi sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from telling lies, slandering, speaking harshly, and talking vainly.

5. *Surāmeraya-majjha-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from consuming intoxicating drinks or

drugs.

6. *Vikālabhojanā veramani sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from taking food after midday till dawn the next day.

7. *Nacca gīta vādita visuka dassana mālāgandha vilepana dhāraṇa maṇḍana vibūsanatthānā veramani sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, which are obstacles to the Noble Practice, and also abstaining from wearing flowers, using perfumes and beautifying with any cosmetic.

8. *Uccāsayana mahāsayanā veramani sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from staying on any high or luxurious seat or bed.

9. *Mettāsahagatena cetasā sabbapāṇabhūtesu pharittvā viharanaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to live permeating all living beings with the mind accompanied by loving-kindness.

Note: (1) For observing the eight precepts of *Aṭṭhaṅga-sīla* omit the ninth precept.

- (2) For observing the five precepts of Pañca-Sīla only the first five precepts should be recited changing the third precept as:



*Kāmesumicchārā veramani sikkhāpadam  
samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe well the precept of abstaining from sexual misconduct and the misuse of the senses.

Buddhists also observe Uposatha-Sīla on auspicious days. After undertaking to observe the precepts, they should calmly and peacefully undertake meditation such as reflecting on the attributes of the Buddha, i.e. *Buddhānussati*, or radiating loving-kindness, i.e., *Mettā Bhāvanā*, to keep their mind pure and to attain great benefits.

The benefits of observing Uposatha-sīla are much greater than those of observing Pañca-Sīla.

- (1) One who observes Uposatha-sīla will achieve great wealth and power.
- (2) Even a future Universal Monarch can become a Universal Monarch only if he observes Uposatha-Sīla.
- (3) One will achieve progressive benefits of enjoying the great wealth and luxuries of celestial beings and of human beings throughout saṃsāra until one finally attains Nibbāna.
- (4) In the present existence one will be innocent, righteous and good, and thus one will receive great admiration and loving-kindness from many persons as well as from celestial beings.
- (5) The wishes of those who observe Uposatha-Sīla will be fulfilled.

### Fourfold Morality for Overall Purity

For monks who undertake the Noble Threefold Training they must observe four kinds of morality to be morally pure in all respects.

#### (1) *Pātimokkha-saṃvara Sīla*

This is the moral discipline consisting of 227 rules which the Buddha prescribes for bhikkhus to observe.

'*Pātimokkha*' is the virtue of the training precepts, for it frees him who protects it, guards it, from the pains of the woeful abodes.

'*Saṃvara*' means restraint, which is a term for bodily and verbal non-transgression.

For lay persons *Uposatha-sīla* serves as *patimokkha-saṃvara sīla*.

#### (2) *Indriya-saṃvara Sīla*

It is the restraint of six sense faculties, namely, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind, to prevent the arising of defilements at these faculties.

#### (3) *Ājīvapārisuddhi Sīla*

This is the morality which concerns with the purity of livelihood. As one has undertaken to lead a noble life as a meditator, one must avoid improper search and evil conduct in earning one's livelihood.

#### (4) *Paccaya-sanissita Sīla*

This is the morality concerning with the use of the necessities of life. One must contemplate the pur-

pose of using the necessities of life such as robe, food, dwelling place and medicine in order to prevent the arising of defilements in using them.

Lay yogīs (meditators) should also observe *Catuparisuddhi Sīla* to advance quickly in meditation.

## 6 Training of Concentration (*Samādhi Sikkhā*)

Moral Training subdues gross defilements (*vīṭikkama kilesās*) and prevent them from arising in the mind. So it purifies the mind from gross defilements. The 'purity of morality' is called '*Silavisuddhi*'.

But moderate defilements (*Pariyuṭṭhāna kilesās*) still arise in the mind and keep agitating the mind. These defilements can be subdued and prevented from arising for long periods only by mental culture called **Tranquillity Meditation** (*Samatha Bhāvanā*). Only when these defilements are suppressed and prevented not to arise in the mind, will the mind be pure, calm and powerful. The '*purity of the mind*' is called '*cittavisuddhi*'.

*As it is very important to attain the Purity of the Mind and to make the mind very powerful to see the ultimate realities clearly, the Buddha prescribes 40 subjects of tranquillity meditation. All these meditation subjects are useful and beneficial in their own ways and any one of them can be used to develop the Right Concentration (Sammāsamādhi) which will bring about the Purity of the Mind.*

As the development of the right concentration is crucial to proceed to **Insight Meditation** (*Vipassanā Bhāvanā*) the Buddha exhorts bhikkhus to develop the

right concentration in Samādhi Sutta and many other Suttas.

*“Samādhim bhikkhave bhāvētha samāhito  
bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.”*

*“Oh monks, try to develop mental concentration.”*

*The monk, who has developed concentration, will be able to see things as they really are.”*

As the **human mind** is normally blinded by **ignorance** (*avijjā*) and five other defilements called the **Hindrances** (*Nīvaraṇas*) we cannot see our mind and its components as well as material groups (*rūpa kalāpas*) and their components.

Abhidhamma describes that 45 types of minds can arise in a worldlying and jhāna cittas will also arise when he can develop jhānas. All these minds are made up of different combinations of consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*).

Also the body is made up of 21 types of material groups with different combinations of ultimate materiality (*rūpa*). These must be observed as they really are to see the ultimate realities that are concerned with vipassanā. To observe these ultimate realities as they really are, it is crucial to develop the right concentration.

#### **Five Hindrances or Enemies** (*Nīvaraṇas*)

The hindrances defile, debase, inflict and agitate the mind to be restless and wandering from one sense object to another. They make us heedless and forget-

ful to carry out meritorious deeds. They hinder and prevent the arising of wholesome thoughts, good deeds, *jhānas* and *maggas* (path-consciousness).

So they are our greatest close enemies for they hinder and obstruct our progress in life and will send us to woeful abodes. Therefore, we must fight against them with all our might. We must drive them away from our minds and suppress them so that they cannot arise again. They represent the following immoral mental factors.

(1) *Kāmacchanda* - Sense desire or greed (*Lobha*)

It influences the mind most of the time by desiring to get this and that, to go for sensual pleasure, and to wander from one sense object to another. It causes greed-rooted consciousness to arise.

It makes one to while away the time with immoral minds and forget meritorious deeds. In meditation it hinders and obstructs the arising of *jhāna*, *magga*, *phala* by distracting the mind to various sense objects.

(2) *Vyāpāda* - Ill-will, anger or hatred (*dosa*)

It overwhelms and burns the mind when the mind harbours grief, anger, hatred, sorrow, worry, dissatisfaction, depression, stress and strain, etc. It causes anger-rooted consciousness to arise together with mental pain. While anger-rooted consciousness arises, the associated ignorance (*avijjā*) blinds the mind to be ignorant of meritorious deeds.

In meditation the anger-rooted consciousness hin-

ders and obstructs the arising of jhāna, magga, phalla.

(3) *Thina-middha* - Sloth and Torpor

They make the mind dull, morbid, inactive, lazy and drowsy, They cause only unwholesome minds to arise even when one is saying prayers or undertaking meditation. Thus one acquires no merit as no wholesome minds arise.

(4) *Uddhacca-kukkucca* - Restlessness and Remorse

Uddhacca makes the mind restless and causes ignorance-rooted consciousness to arise. Kukkucca makes one remorseful over the undone wholesome deed or the unwholesome deed which has been done; it causes anger-rooted consciousness to arise. Thus restlessness and remorse make one forget about meritorious deeds and obstructs the arising of jhāna, magga and phala in meditation.

(5) *Vicikicchā* - Sceptical doubt

It is the doubt with respect to the Triple Gem, the Doctrine of Dependent Arising including kamma and its result, the four Noble Truths and the Threefold Noble Training. It causes ignorance-rooted consciousness to arise, blocking the arising of wholesome consciousness, jhāna, magga and phala.

The Buddha compares sense-desire with water mixed with many colours, ill-will with boiling water, sloth and torpor with water covered with mosses, restlessness and remorse with agitated water whipped by the wind, and sceptical doubt with turbid, muddy water.

Just as in such water one cannot perceive one's own reflection, so also in the presence of any one of these five hindrances, one cannot clearly discern one's own benefit, nor that of others, nor that of both.

**Five Powers or Friends** (*Balas and Faculties*)

To combat the hindrances we have five innate qualities which can act both as spiritual powers (*balas*) and as spiritual faculties (*indriyas*).

As spiritual faculties they have the ability to control their concomitants (*citta* and other *cetasikas*) and as powers or strengths they can stand firm and unshakeable against the opposing forces. So if we cultivate and develop these powers, we shall win the battle against the enemies.

(1) *Saddhā* - Faith or confidence in the Triple Gem and the Noble Eightfold Path

When one understands the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha and the nature of the Noble Eightfold Path in all aspects, one has faith and confidence (*saddhā*) that these things are real and that they can extinguish all suffering and bring eternal peace and happiness. When one has such faith and confidence and knows that one can rely on them, one is not hesitant to fight bravely against the hindrances. In fact, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha are the greatest powers in the world. When one is sure that one can get the help of these powers, one is certain to achieve success. If faith (*saddhā*) is very strong, one can put the Samsāra suffering to an end.

- (2) *Vīriya* - Effort or energy that can support its concomitants not to slacken

If one works hard, one can even become a Buddha. So if effort or energy (*vīriya*) is strong, one can certainly succeed in fighting against the hindrances. When one comes face to face with difficulty, one should not be upset but work on with brilliant, strenuous effort and perseverance till one achieves success.

*Vīriya* is a neutral mental factor which can participate both in good and bad endeavour. Only the effort that associates with wholesome minds is good. The strenuous effort that can discard the evils that have arisen in the mind, prevent the arising of unarisen evils, bring about the arising of unarisen good, intensify and multiply the arisen good is the right effort.

- (3) *Sati*- Mindfulness; recollection of meritorious deeds

Not to be heedless but to be always mindful and aware of the meritorious deed one is performing is called *sati*. The Buddha reminds his disciples every morning; "*Appamādena bhikkhave sampādettha - O bhikkhus, try to accomplish the meritorious deeds mindfully and diligently*".

We should take heed of this reminder and attend to our wholesome action mindfully. When we undertake meditation we must fix our attention on the meditation object and try to be aware of the object constantly.

- (4) *Samādhi* - Concentration; one-pointedness of the



mind

*Samādhi* represents the *ekaggatā cetasika*. It is a neutral mental factor that associates with all minds. It unites its concomitants, that is consciousness and mental factors, and keep them fixed on the meditation object and let them discern the object attentively. When *samādhi* is strong it can suppress sense desire (*kamacchanda*) not to arise in the mind.

*Viriya, sati* and *samādhi* constitute the Training of Concentration. Developing them means fulfilling the training of concentration in order to attain the right concentration. The right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) is equivalent to the concentration associated with four *rūpāvacara jhānas* according to the teaching of the Buddha in *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*.

When the right concentration is attained, the *jhāna* factors are fully developed and they can effectively suppress the hindrances not to arise in the mind. So the battle against the hindrances is won. As the mind is now free from all defilements, the '*purity of the mind*' (*Citta Visuddhi*) is attained.

(5) *Paññā* - Wisdom; penetrative understanding of the true nature of the sense object

*Wisdom (paññā)* understands the true nature of the sense object in terms of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*) as well as in terms of the Four Noble Truths. It also understands the sense object as moral and immoral, as wholesome and unwholesome, as *kamma* and its result. That which un-

derstands in various ways as described here is called *wisdom (paññā)*.

*Wisdom* has the characteristic of knowing the truth including the Four Noble Truths. It has the function of making the sense object become evident and vivid. As it knows the true nature of the sense object, it manifests itself as non-delusion in the minds of meditators.

The *ignorance (avijjā or moha)* has the nature of concealing the true nature of a sense object so that this true nature remains hidden and unexposed. As *ignorance* does not know the true nature of a sense object, it also has the nature of delusion.

*Wisdom* is like the search light that exposes the true nature of the sense object and thereby it removes the darkness of *ignorance*. As *wisdom* is the opposite of *avijjā* or *moha*, it is called *vijjā* or *amoha*.

Wisdom represents the Path factor called '*the Right Understanding*' (*Sammādiṭṭhi*). It begins with the understanding of kamma and its result and it has to be developed to the level of Path-wisdom which penetratively understands the Four Noble Truths in all respects.

### Undertaking Tranquillity Meditation

Of the forty subjects of tranquillity meditation mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpānassati*) is most popular and widely used in many meditation centres to develop concentration.

In practising mindfulness of breathing it is important to follow the instructions of the Buddha as de-

scribed in the Buddhist Canons and Visuddhi Magga. It should be practised under the guidance of a competent teacher, especially a teacher who can himself develop the four rūpāvacara jhānas in Ānāpānassati.

While the meditator is focusing his mind on the in-breath and the out-breath at the touching point of the breath with the nostrils or the upper lip, sense-sphere moral minds (*mahākusala cittas*) will arise by billions every second accompanied by five jhāna factors as described in Abhidhamma. When the jhāna factors are fully developed they will inhibit the hindrances from arising.

Thus when access jhāna or first jhāna is attained, the mind is free from all defilements and '*the purity of the mind*' called '*citta visuddhi*' is achieved.

In Ānāpānassati meditation there are three types of meditation signs (*nimitta*) and three stages of meditation (*bhāvanā*). The in-breath and the out-breath which are known by their gentle brushing at the tip of the nose or at the upper lip are called the *preparatory sign* (*parikamma nimitta*).

As concentration rises to some extent the in-breath and the out-breath appear as grey cigarette smoke. This sign is also taken to be the preparatory sign. As one continues the meditation by focusing the mind on the in-breath and the out-breath at the touching point, the sign becomes whiter and whiter until it becomes a white rod or a white mass like cotton at the point of contact of the breath with the nostrils. This purely white sign is called the *acquired sign* (*uggaha nimitta*).

One continues the meditation by focusing his attention on the in-breath and the out-breath at the touching point. But when his mind remains focused on the acquired sign, it should be kept fixed there until the sign becomes very bright and clear. This new sign is called the *counter sign* (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). The acquired sign and the counter sign may appear in different forms depending on the perception of the meditators.

The meditation from the beginning to the time just before the appearance of the counter sign is called the '*preparatory stage of meditation*' (*parikamma bhāvanā*). The concentration associated with the mind at this stage of meditation is called the '*preparatory concentration*' (*parikamma samādhi*). At this stage light may start coming out from the mind according to the Buddha's discourse in Pacalāyamāna Sutta.

*When the counter sign appears the 'neighbourhood stage of meditation' (Upacāra bhāvanā) is reached. The concentration at this stage is called 'access concentration' or 'neighbourhood concentration' (upacāra samādhi). At this stage very bright and penetrative light is radiated from the concentrated mind. With the help of this light the meditator can see surrounding objects clearly with closed eyes. He can also see the internal organs like the liver, the lungs and the heart in his body as well as in others's bodies.*

By fixing his mind on the counter sign the meditator continues his meditation. When the mind remains fixed on the counter sign for one hour, two hours or

three hours, it can be assumed that he attains the first *jhāna*. But to make sure, the mind door (life continuum) must be discerned; the counter sign and the *jhāna* factors that appear in the mind door must also be discerned. He then practises to gain mastery in five ways with respect to the first *jhāna*. If successful, it is certain that he can develop the first *jhāna* skilfully.

The meditation that has reached the stage of *jhāna* is called the 'absorption stage of meditation' (*appanā bhāvanā*). The concentration at this stage is called the 'absorption concentration' or '*jhāna* concentration'. (*appanāsamādhi*).

After gaining mastery on the first *jhāna*, the meditator can develop the second *jhāna* by eliminating two *jhāna* factors called initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*). After practising to gain mastery in five ways with respect to the second *jhāna*, he eliminates the third *jhāna* factor '*pīti*' to develop the third *jhāna*. In the same way he can develop the fourth *jhāna* by eliminating 'bliss' (*sukha*) and substituting it with 'neutral feeling' (*upekkhā*). All *jhāna* consciousnesses and mental factors take the counter sign as their object.

## 7 Training of Wisdom (*Pañña Sikkhā*)

The mind is purified in seven stages by undertaking the Noble Threefold Training. The first stage is the Purity of Morality (*Sīla Visuddhi*) which is attained by the Training of Morality. The mind is free from

gross defilements at this stage.

The second stage is the Purity of the Mind (*Citta Visuddhi*) which is achieved when jhāna is attained in tranquillity meditation. The mind is now free from all arisen defilements.

At this stage though the mind is free from defilements as no defilements arise in the mind, latent defilements (*anusaya kilesās*) still remain in the mind.

Latent defilements are like the roots of a big tree that are under the ground and cannot be seen. Even though we cut the branches and the trunk of a big tree leaving its roots, the tree does not die yet. In the rainy season it will grow up again.

Similarly by removing gross defilements and medium defilements but leaving latent defilements, defilements are not totally eliminated yet. When sense objects come in contact with the sense doors, latent kilesās will spring up in the mind as pariyuṭṭhāna kilesās (moderate defilements) again.

Latent defilements (*anusaya kilesās*) can be uprooted and destroyed completely only by undertaking the Training of Wisdom. Here we have to practise Insight Meditation (*Vipassanā*) in which the psychophysical phenomena that manifest themselves as body and mind must be investigated in detail in terms of ultimate realities.

If the mind is blinded by the hindrances and other defilements, the ultimate realities - *cittas*, *cetasikas*, *rūpas* - cannot be seen by the naked eye. They can be seen only by the mind-eye associated with the right

concentration with the help of very bright and penetrative light radiated from the pure mind. So the right concentration has to be developed before the meditator undertakes insight meditation.

Now the third stage in purifying the mind is the **Purity of View** (*Diṭṭhi Visuddhi*), that is, purifying the mind further from the **Wrong View of Personality Belief** (*Sakkāya Diṭṭhi*) taking the combination of the five Aggregates of Existence (*Khandhas*) as a person or self. Thus the five aggregates must be observed vividly to be convinced that only these aggregates exist and no person nor self exists. To observe the five aggregates the ultimate material entities and the ultimate mental entities must be defined.

### **Defining Materiality and Mentality**

Therefore, in the Training of Wisdom, the meditator must perform the task of **Defining Materiality** (*Rūpa-kammaṭṭhāna*) and **Defining Mentality** (*Nāma-kammaṭṭhāna*).

He develops the right concentration that he has attained, and then defines the four primary elements by means of the meditation called **Defining the Four Primary Elements** (*Catudhātuvavatthāna*). The four primary elements are the element of solidity (*pathavī*), the element of fluidity (*āpo*), the element of heat (*tejo*) and the element of motion (*vāyo*).

While he focuses his mind to discern clearly the four elements in the body, the clear mass of clear matter (*pasāda rūpa*) appears. He penetrates the clear mass

to discern the four primary elements when the clear mass breaks up into tiny particles of material groups (*rūpa kalāpas*) which arise and perish very rapidly. He then discerns the primary elements and derived elements (*upādā rūpa*) in the particles in accordance with the five sense doors. Thus he comes to know all the ultimate material entities that make up the body by direct knowledge.

Then he continues with the task of **Defining Mentality**. Abhidhamma describes that life-continuum (*bhavaṅga cittas*) serve as the mind door and all sense objects including past sense objects, *cittas*, *cetasikas* and *rūpas* which are all formless can appear in the mind door.

The meditator develops the right concentration until very bright and penetrative light is radiated. He observes the eye-door (*cakkhu-pasāda*) and the mind-door together, and then observes a visible object striking the two doors simultaneously. Then he discerns the minds that arise in the eye-door as well as in the mind-door in cognizing the sense object.

He then analyzes each mind to find out the mental factors that associate with each mind. He repeats the task of discerning and analyzing the minds with the remaining five sense doors.

It is very important to analyze each mental group (mind) and material group (*rūpa-kalāpa*) into their ultimate components in order to know the ultimate realities (*paramatthas*), to achieve 'ghana vinibbhoga' -



breaking down the compactness, and to penetrate into the characteristic of non-self or no-soul (*anatta*).

*The anatta characteristic is not distinct and not known because it is covered up by 'ghana' (compactness as group or lump). If the 'ghana' can be broken up or analyzed, the anatta characteristic becomes clear and evident as it really is.*

(*Abhi. A. 2. 47; Vs. 2. 276*)

When the meditator has defined all the *cittas*, *cetasikas*, and *rūpas* internally in himself and externally in others, he is convinced that everyone is made up of five aggregates - the material aggregate, the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the aggregate of mental formations and the aggregate of consciousness.

Since these aggregates are arising and perishing very rapidly and incessantly, there is no substantive entity that can be called a 'person', 'self', 'soul' or 'ego'. So he can dismiss the wrong view of '*personality belief*' and attains the '**Purity of View**'.

The knowledge of defining each *citta*, each *cetasika*, and each kind of *rūpa* by means of their respective characteristics, functions, manifestations and approximate causes is known as the '**Knowledge of Defining Mentality-Materiality**'. (*Nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*).

### **Purification by Overcoming Doubt**

The meditator who has defined mentality-material-

ity both internally and externally must further discern the causes that give rise to these mentality-materiality. Other- wise doubt or wrong view may arise in him. So he discerns the four causes - kamma, consciousness, heat, nutriment - which give rise to materiality.

Next he discerns the causes that give rise to mentality. He found that a series of minds to cognize each sense object arises when the sense object strikes the corresponding sense door.

There are still doubts concerning the past, the present, and the future such as “Was I in the past? What was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? What shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future? From what existence comes this existence? What existence will follow the present existence?”

To clarify these doubts the meditator discerns the cause-effect relations of Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*). He discerns the past five causes - viz., ignorance (*avijjā*), kamma-formations (*saṅkhāra*), craving (*tanhā*), clinging (*upādāna*) and kamma (*kammabhava*), that give rise to the present five effects - viz., resultant consciousness (*viññāṇa*), mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense bases (*saḷayatana*), contact (*phassa*), and feeling (*vedanā*).

He also discerns the present five causes - viz., ignorance, craving, clinging, kamma-formations, and kamma, that will condition the arising of the future five effects -viz., resultant consciousness, mentality-

materiality, six sense bases, contact and feeling.

By tracing the series of mentality-materiality backward and forward he discerns the Paṭiccasamuppāda causal relations from one existence to another in terms of one cause and one effect as:

- (1) dependent on ignorance (*avijjā*) arise kamma formations (*saṅkhāra*);
- (2) dependent on kamma formations arises resultant consciousness (*viññāna*);
- (3) dependent on the resultant consciousness arise associated cetasikas (*nāma*) and kammaja-rūpa;
- (4) dependent on nāma-rūpa arise six internal bases (*saḷāyatana*);
- (5) dependent on six internal bases arises contact (*phassa*) between sense objects and minds;
- (6) dependent on contact arises feeling (*vedanā*);
- (7) dependent on feeling arises craving (*taṇhā*);
- (8) dependent on craving arises clinging (*upādāna*);
- (9) dependent on clinging arise kamma formations (*kammabhava*) and rebirth process (*upapattibhava*);
- (10) dependent on kamma formations (in the present existence) arises birth (*jāti*) (in the future existence);
- (11) dependent on birth arise decay-and-death (*jarāmarāṇa*), worry (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair

(*upāyāsa*). (S.1.78)

After discerning clearly all the causal relations from the most past existence to the last future existence, he can observe the whole series of the arising and perishing of mentality-materiality extending from the most past existence to the last future existence. It is similar to seeing the series of events in a movie after watching the movie.

So he can get rid of all the doubts described earlier as well as the wrong views such as the 'View of Uncausedness' (*Ahetuka-dīṭṭhi*), the 'View of the Wrong Cause' (*Visamahetuka-dīṭṭhi*), the 'View of the Inefficacy of Action' (*Akiriya-dīṭṭhi*), the 'View of Nihilism' (*Natthika-dīṭṭhi*), the 'View of Eternity of the Soul' (*Sassata-dīṭṭhi*) and the 'View of Annihilation of the Soul' (*Uccheda-dīṭṭhi*).

The 'Knowledge of discerning the causes of mentality-materiality' is called '*Paccaya-pariggaha-nāṇa*'. This knowledge marks the 'State of Purification by Overcoming Doubt' (*Kaṅkhāvitarāṇa Visuddhi*).

Furthermore the causes of Paṭiccasamuppāda causal relations constitute 'the truth of the cause of suffering' (*samudaya-sacca*) and the effects constitute 'the truth of suffering' (*dukkha-sacca*).

Therefore, the meditator has also observed with wisdom

- (i) the arising of the present *dukkha sacca* due to the past *samudaya sacca*, and

- (ii) the arising of the future *dukkha sacca* due to the present *samudaya sacca*.

The causal relations of Dependent Arising have been explained in detail in Abhidhamma. Practical verification of these causal relations with wisdom is very important. The Buddha has reminded Ānanda that *beings have to undergo the round of rebirths because they do not understand the causal relations of Paṭiccasamuppāda.* (D.2.47, S.1. 318)

Also in *Visuddhi Magga* (2.221) and *Abhidhamma Commentary* (2. 189) it is clearly stated thus:

*“There is no one, even in a dream, who has emancipated from the round of misery without the ability to break through the Paṭiccasamuppāda causal relations of the saṃsāra machine with his wisdom sword which has been sharpened on the sacred whetstone of concentration.”*

### Further Purification and Liberation

Having defined the cittas, the cetasikas and the rūpas both internally and externally, and having discerned the causal relations of Dependent Arising, the meditator can now undertake vipassanā.

He discerns the nature of arising and dissolving of each rūpa in each sense door with his wisdom and contemplates the nature of impermanence as ‘*anicca, anicca*’, repeatedly. He discerns the nature of being tortured incessantly by the dissolution of rūpas and contemplates ‘*dukkha, dukkha*’, repeatedly. He discerns clearly with his wisdom the absence of a perma-

ment, imperishable substance that can be called a 'self' or 'soul' and contemplates repeatedly '*anatta, anatta*'.

When he can discern the three characteristic marks of rūpas quite rapidly and well both internally and externally, he discerns the three characteristic marks of mentality (*nāma*), pertaining to the six kinds of cognitive series of consciousness. Observing the rapid arising and dissolution of each cognitive consciousness and its concomitant cetasikas at every conscious moment with his wisdom, he reflects repeatedly '*anicca, anicca!*' He reflects in this way on all the cittas and the cetasikas in the six kinds of cognitive series both internally and externally.

Similarly he discerns the nature of being tortured incessantly by the rapid dissolution of cittas and cetasikas and contemplates '*dukkha, dukkha*'.

Again he discerns with his wisdom the absence of a permanent, imperishable substance that can be called a 'self' or 'soul' and contemplates '*anatta, anatta*'.

Then he reflects on the three characteristic marks of mentality and materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) together pertaining to the six kinds of cognitive series of consciousness. Focusing his mind on each consciousness, its concomitants, the rūpa associated with the physical base and the sense objects, he contemplates repeatedly '*anicca, anicca*, on the nature of arising and dissolving, '*dukkha, dukkha*' on the nature of being tortured incessantly, and '*anatta, anatta*' on the nature of not-self and no-soul.

He develops ten insight knowledges step by step:

- (1) *Sammasana Nāṇa* – the knowledge of defining mentality-materiality as impermanent, painful and non-self,
- (2) *Udayabbaya Nāṇa* – the knowledge that comprehends the mentality-materiality at the genetic instant as well as at the dissolving instant together with the three characteristic marks,
- (3) *Bhaṅga Nāṇa* – the knowledge of contemplation of the incessant dissolution of mentality-materiality,
- (4) *Bhaya Nāṇa* – the knowledge of the appearance of mentality-materiality as terror,
- (5) *Ādīnava Nāṇa* – the knowledge of realization of fault and unsatisfactoriness in mentality-materiality,
- (6) *Nibbidā Nāṇa* – the knowledge of feeling bored and disgusted with all sorts of formation (*nāma-rūpa*),
- (7) *Muñcitukamyatā Nāṇa* – the knowledge of desire for deliverance from all sorts of formations,
- (8) *Paṭisaṅkhā Nāṇa* – the knowledge of exertion for deliverance from all formations,
- (9) *Saṅkhārupekkhā Nāṇa* – the knowledge of equanimity towards all formations,
- (10) *Anuloma Nāṇa* – the knowledge of conformity to the Path wisdom.

On attaining *Udayabbaya-nāṇa* the purification of the mind by knowledge and vision of what is the Path and what is not the Path (*Maggāmagga-nāṇadassana*

*Visuddhi*) is achieved. On attaining *Anuloma-ñāṇa* the purification of the mind by knowledge and vision of the way (*Paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana Visuddhi*) is accomplished.

Immediately after *Anuloma-ñāṇa* the change of lineage knowledge (*Gotrabhu-ñāṇa*) arises once taking Nibbāna as its object.

After that the first Path-consciousness (*Sotāpattimagga citta*) arises once followed by two or three Fruition-consciousness (*sotāpattiphala citta*), all taking Nibbāna as their object.

The meditator becomes a *Stream Winner* (*Sotāpanna*) who can enjoy the unique bliss of Nibbāna as much as he likes and he is guaranteed never to be reborn in the woeful abodes again. The stream winner can live happily with his family and by the momentum of his vipassanā meditation he will become an Arahant, a Perfect One, within seven existences.

If he wishes to achieve higher attainment, a stream winner can undertake vipassanā meditation again to develop three higher Path wisdoms and become an Arahant in this very life. The knowledge of the four Paths is known as '*Ñāṇadassana Visuddhi*' - the purification by knowledge and vision.

The fourfold Path wisdom eradicates all latent defilements. So the mind of an Arahant is totally pure. The five causes for conditioning a new existence are no longer present. So for an Arahant there will be no future existence. After passing away into Parinibbāna he will continue enjoying the bliss of Nibbāna for ever.



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In Nibbāna there exist only eternal peace and happiness but no birth, no ageing, no sickness and no death.

***The only Path to Eternal Peace***

*The only Path that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering of the Noble Path and to the realization of Nibbāna is the Noble Eightfold Path.*

***Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta***

***Salvation by Intellectual Enlightenment***

*It is a glory of Buddhism that it makes intellectual enlightenment an essential condition of salvation. In Buddhism morality and intellectual enlightenment are inseparable from one another. While morality forms the basis of the higher life, knowledge and wisdom complete it.*

*Indian Professor Lakshmi Narasu,  
"The essence of Buddhism."*

***Nothing to Surpass Buddhism***

*Buddhist or not Buddhist, I have examined every one of the great religious systems of the world, and in none of them have I found anything to surpass, in beauty and comprehensiveness, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that Path.*

*Professor Rhys Davids, English Scholar*

## 8 *Conclusion: Walk in the Light of Abhidhamma*

Abhidhamma reveals the real world and the true nature of existence. It describes the psychophysical processes of living and dying in detail. It provides the right understanding and the right view about living and dying to be used as the guiding torch in life.

Remember that we are having the best existence, the best time and the best opportunity to lead a righteous, peaceful and happy life and to work for our liberation from all suffering.

With the right view we gain from the study of Abhidhamma, with the help of the bright, penetrative light of the guiding torch of Abhidhamma, let us walk together along the Noble Eightfold Path straight to Nibbāna to enjoy eternal peace and happiness in this very life.

**Dr. Mehm Tin Mon**

25-5-2006

## Short Biography of Dr. Mehm Tin Mon

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Dr. Mehm Tin Mon is a scholar in chemistry as well as in Buddhism. He combined science teaching with social religious activities throughout his university teaching career for 37 years.

After retiring as Professor of Chemistry, he became Adviser to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Professor in the International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon. He has been serving his country in these two capacities since 1993.

He has been ardently teaching Buddha Abhidhamma and Buddhist meditation and giving public lectures on Buddhism in Myanmar and abroad for many years. He was awarded the distinguished religious title of ' Mahasaddhamma Jotikadaja ' in 2003 by the Government of the Union of Myanmar for his outstanding contribution to the propagation of Buddhism in Myanmar and abroad.

He has written 20 books on education , 50 books on Buddhism and about 200 articles in magazines and journals. His clear thinking, delightful teaching and simple clear style of writing have won the admiration of many listeners and readers.

He is also the President of International Paauk Forest Sāsana Centres where Samatha and Vipassanā Meditation are taught and practised in detail as expounded by the Blessed One.